SORROWS SANCTIFIED

DANIEL SHEPARDSON

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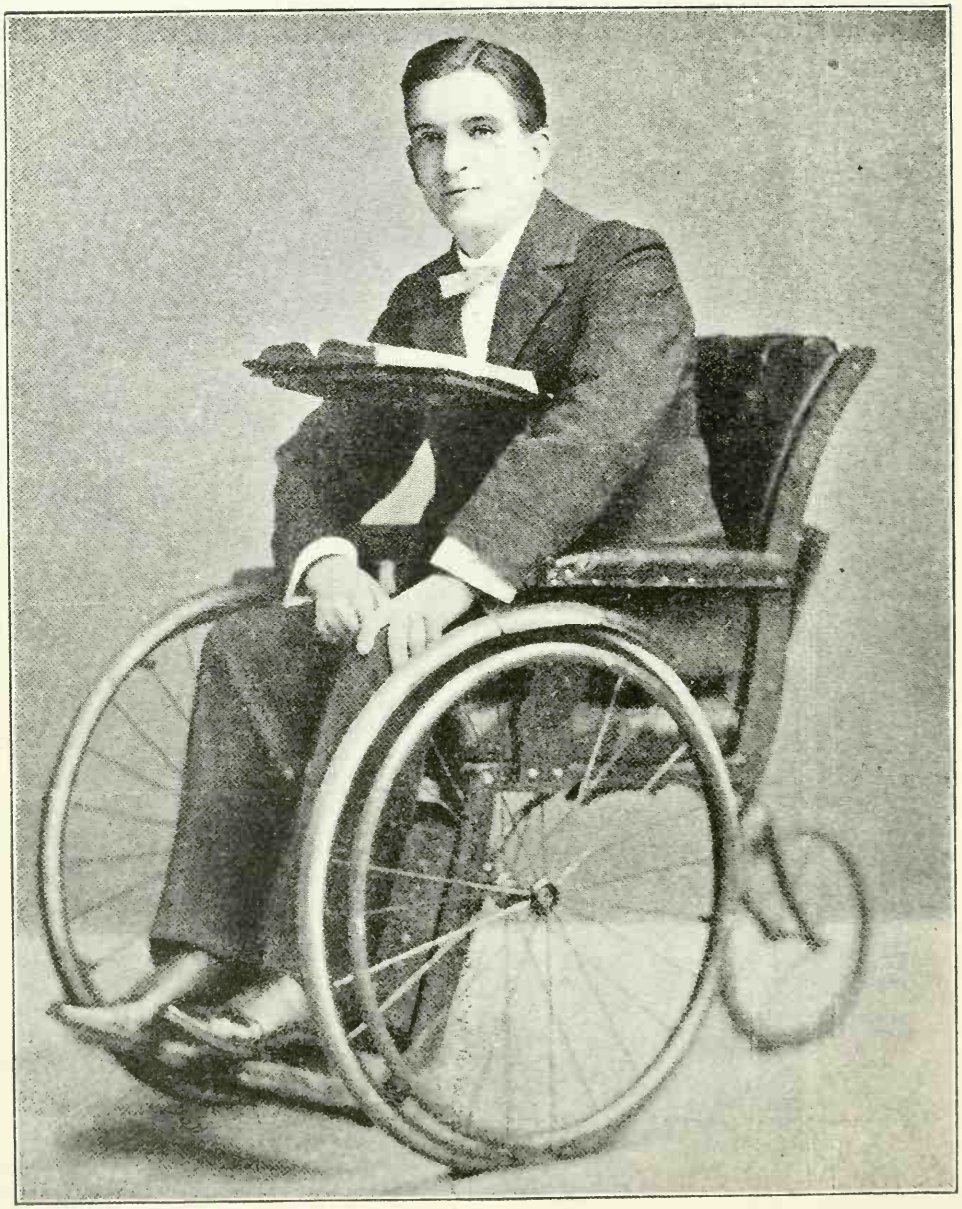
To A. D. Love
on his 82nd Birthday
from
Chas M Long



Daniel Shepardson Jr.

Sorrows Sanctified

and

Other Sermons

BY

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Author of "STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS"

(*Fourth Edition—Enlarged and Revised*)

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Mrs Daniel Shepardson

TO MY WIFE

MARY BELLE SMITH,

WHO WAS WILLING TO JOIN HER LIFE TO ONE IN A WHEEL-CHAIR; WHO FOR EIGHT YEARS WITH RARE SYMPATHY HAS SHARED MY SHADOWS, AND WHOSE PEACEFUL PRESENCE AND CONSTANT GOOD CHEER HAVE ENHANCED MY SUNSHINE, THESE PAGES ARE GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

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PREFACE

The following sermons have been used of God in many cities in the Central States, during various seasons of special meetings, while the writer has been traveling about as an Evangelist. They are now published in response to many requests from those who have heard one or more of them, in the hope that they may be a pleasant and profitable souvenir of past experiences, and may render somewhat more permanent the impressions made at the time of their delivery. The frontispiece will remind the reader of the physical background of these thoughts, and it is the fond trust of the writer that some, who are among the "shut-ins," may also derive help and cheer from the perusal of these pages. The religion of Jesus is the only religion that enables us to get along with sorrow and shade without being either discouraged or hardened by them. It alone furnishes the philosopher's stone by which the baser metals, the lead and copper of life, may be changed into the imperishable and invaluable silver and gold of character. All other religions of the world have proved themselves to be religions of despair. They have brought no sweet relief to the burdened

heart, and no Balm of Gilead to the broken life. Where other religions have been dismal failures, the religion of Jesus has gloriously triumphed. He does "heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, and set at liberty them that are bruised." Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of joy and sunshine. It brings gladness out of grief, song out of sorrow, sunshine out of shade. It is not a burden, but a boon; not a hindrance, but a help; not a fast or a funeral, but a feast. The call of Christ as of the prophet of old is, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." That these pages may be blessed by the great Lord of the Harvest to you, and may help you to lead a more cheerful, consecrated, Christian life, is the sincere prayer of the writer

D. S., Jr.

Newark, Ohio, July 1, 1898.

PREFACE TO FOURTH EDITION.

The kind reception given to the first three thousand of these sermons and the many evidences of their helpfulness have led me to enlarge and revise the earlier editions, and to put the discourses in their present form. May the Savior continue to make them a blessing.

D. S.

NEWARK, Ohio, Mar. 1, 1903.

Sorrows Sanctified

James 1: 2-4.—"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

THE epistle in which the words of our text are found was written by that James, the brother of our Lord, who was for years at the head of the Jerusalem church. It was addressed to the Christian Jews, who were at this time scattered over the entire known world; and it had as its purpose their comfort and admonition in view of existing and future trials. The lot of the Christian Jew was indeed a hard one, and it was very appropriate that some such words as those of our text should have been written to him, to buoy him up in the midst of his overwhelming woes.

His troubles came, in general, from two sources. There were, first, the unchristian Jews, that vast majority of the Jewish nation, who still clung tenaciously to Judaism, and had

nought but curses and revilings for any who espoused the cause of the hated Nazarene. If, perchance, any one of their own number renounced Judaism for Christianity, he was earnestly labored with, and all possible efforts were made to reclaim him from the error of his ways. It is probable that many were thus induced to return to Judaism, since the book to the Hebrews was called forth to counteract just such a tendency. If, however, a Jew persisted in his new-born faith, he was considered a breeder of disorder, a heretic; was subjected to the most bitter denunciations; was mercilessly dragged before the synagogue for trial; and, as history seems to show, sometimes received sentence of death. The bitterness of these persecutions was still sharpened, when one's persecutors were those of one's own home, one's own flesh and blood; when wife and father, son and daughter, vied with one another in heaping curses upon the new-born Christian and his beloved Redeemer. Oh! we at this distant day, and in these Christian times, can have little idea of the terrible hatred of which the Jew was capable. The hatred which these Jews had for their apostate brethren is well expressed by Shakespeare, when he puts into the mouth of Shylock, respecting Antonio, the words:

> "I hate him, for he is a Christian.
> If I can catch him once upon the hip
> I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him."

Hatred has found its very incarnation in the Judases and Shylocks of history, and in the howling mob which thronged the throne of Pilate and only quenched its thirst in the blood of the Son of God.

But these Christian Jews, in common with all Jews, had also another source of trouble. It was the presence everywhere in their beloved land of the conquering Roman. Judea was now a Roman province; her freedom was gone; the legions of the Emperor were quartered in all her cities; the most sacred rites and places of her history were defiled by heathen bands; on all sides appeared the signs of decay and of ultimate national extinction; and within twenty years from the time of the writing of this Epistle, Jerusalem, the City of Peace, the center of the grandest, most momentous and most terrible events of Jewish, if not of the world's, history, will have been burned by the Roman, Titus.

In view of such present and future trials, the words of our text would not have failed to command careful attention. But perhaps some one may say, "These words have no reference to us, since we have no such trials as those of our early Christian brethren. Why should we give heed to such a text as this?" We answer, it is true that these words were written primarily for a certain people, under certain social, political and religious distresses; true that many of us to-day are not in

similar circumstances; but we all have trials and troubles of various sorts. We all, I say, have trials and troubles. Mine are no greater than yours, and yours are no greater than mine; and these words contain principles of life so broad as to be applicable to all times and to all people, and were intended, under divine Providence, to be a source of comfort and consolation to all of God's children in every age of the world. Let us, then, consider for this morning, the theme, "Sorrows Sanctified," or, "The divine ideal of Christian conduct in the midst of trials."

It is well to recall, in passing, that the word translated in our text *temptation* does not convey to us the exact idea of the original Greek. The word *trial*, as given by the revisers in the margin, and preferred by the American Committee, is less likely to be misunderstood. By a temptation we generally mean a seduction to evil, an inclination to sin, an impulse to do that which is wrong; while the word trial is broader, and, though it contains the meaning of the word temptation, refers here also to what we call sorrows, trouble, disappointment, such as come from the loss of property, of position or reputation, of health or of friends.

Notice, again, that our text assumes the existence, not of a single trial, but of divers, many-colored trials. These Christian Jews were encompassed with trials. We have mentioned but two sources of woe. Trials are many and of vari-

ous kinds, and as we read the history of the past, or reflect on the condition of things to-day, we recognize the truth of the text, and sometimes say, in a proverbial form, "Troubles never come singly."

To persons under such circumstances, in the midst of many varied trials, the words of our text come, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

1. We note, in the first place, that trials are largely subjective. Seneca, a famous Latin writer, said, "Our grief lieth in our own opinion and conception of miseries," while Emerson, of our own times, expressed a similar sentiment when he said, "The light in which we see the world comes from the soul of the observer." Let me illustrate the truth expressed in these rather abstract statements. Here are two men whose afflictions are in themselves equal. This, of course, is a presumptive case, for no two men have trials which are exactly similar; and yet allow the case for purposes of illustration. Here are two persons whose trials are in themselves equal. To the one they appear as crushing woes; to the other they are afflictions which endure but for a moment. The one is borne down and overcome by them; the other bears bravely up under and rises above them. The one is rendered narrow and hard-hearted, the other is broadened, developed and rendered tender-hearted. The one is marred by them, the other is made by them.

Where lies the difference? Not in the afflictions themselves, but in the attitude of the two men toward them. Compare Pharaoh and Job. The plagues of the frogs, the lice, the flies, the boils, and the darkness fell upon Pharaoh, and at the end of the story of each we read the melancholy words, "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened." Upon Job even severer afflictions fell. His oxen, his asses, his sheep, his camels, his servants, yea, all his children, were taken away; and yet, at the end of this catalogue of fatalities, we read this significant statement: "Then Job arose and rent his mantle and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground and worshiped and said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.'" Afflictions, then, are largely subjective, and much depends upon the attitude of men toward them.

2. Again, the nature of man's endurance of trial, as well as the effect of trial upon his character, depends upon his belief, his faith in respect to two things: First, what is the source and immediate purpose of affliction? As regards this question, men can be divided into two great classes. There are, of course, all shades of belief, but these two classes will be found to be fairly representative. In the days of Greek philosophers, the Stoics were a large and influential

school. They held that the universe was nothing but the expression of a blind, unintelligent force. Joys and sorrows come alike to all. A blind fate determines all of the events of life. There is no purpose in events. There is no philosophy of life, except the philosophy of cold, stoical endurance. Man is a machine, a puppet in a show, a thing without volition, irresistibly driven on to a purposeless destiny by an impersonal and remorseless Fate. Personality? There is none in God or man.

The Stoic, in the midst of affliction, contracted his features, gritted his teeth, folded his arms, firmly placed his heel on the ground, and said, "I endure because I must." There was no cheer, no uplift, no joy, no buoyancy, about such an endurance as that. It was purely animal courage, hardly worthy even of admiration. The American Indian was a fine modern example of the ancient Stoic. It is needless to remark that to-day there is a large number of people whose system of thought and manner of life are fatalistic and stoical in their tendency.

In striking contrast with this class of men stands a class of persons whom we call Christians. The Christian believes in a personal God, a God all-powerful, yet all-wise, holy, yet benevolent, a being who desires the highest good of every one of his creatures. The Christian believes, and here I would not be misunderstood, that all trials

and afflictions of every sort come directly or indirectly under the providing or permitting providence of a personal, holy and benevolent God, and that they are disciplinary in their purpose; that they are a test of faith, and that God, as a wise father, chastens (trains) whom he loves. In view of this fact, these Jewish Christians and all followers of the meek and lowly Jesus are urged to be cheerful in the midst of various trials, knowing this, that the trying of their faith worketh patience, or, rather, endurance. For one, who professes to be a believer in God and a follower of the patient and suffering Savior, to be a discontented grumbler, a kicker, a morose complainer and a pessimistic bore, is to impugn the character of God, to cast reflections on the truth of his Word, to disgrace the Church of Christ, and to help to make the name of Christian a byword and a reproach. As you believe in God and his eternal purpose, as you believe in Christ and his saving power, as you believe in the Holy Spirit and his ministrations of comfort and peace, as you profess to have your life hidden with Christ in God, and to be walking by faith in him, as seeing him who is invisible, in the name of the Triune God, I beseech of you:

"Look up and not down;
Look out and not in;
Look forward and not back
And lend a hand."

A faith which has never been tested is generally a weak, sickly sort of thing. The house-plant which has been carefully guarded from all opposing winds and currents, the hot-house flowers which have been ever accustomed to a constant temperature, quickly wither and fall away when the hoar-frost strikes them; but that sapling, faith, which stands out in the open field, where winds and storms play upon it, sends its shoots deeper at every tug of the tempest, and wreathes its roots around the everlasting rocks. It's when we have to buffet the storm, when the tempests roar, and the earth trembles beneath our feet, that faith is tested, and through testing becomes firm. Out of struggle strength is born, and from the midst of conflict convictions come. No one realizes the trustworthiness of God, or the faithfulness of his promises, as he who has been through the furnace of trouble and found them true. Such an one feels sure that "all things work together for good to those that love God."

"The trying of faith worketh patience." How shall we describe this marvelous product, patience! They call it a negative virtue, a silent virtue, a passive virtue; but if it is negative and silent and passive, it is not less powerful. The mightiest forces of the universe are the silent forces.

"The heavens declare the glory of God
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Day unto day uttereth speech
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language
Their voice is not heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth
And their words to the end of the world."

The power that whirls the worlds through space is noiseless, but it is none the less resistless. We speak, to be sure, of the music of the spheres, but it is a symphony of silence. "Worketh patience." This wonderful product is not produced in a moment. If patience is so great a power and so excellent a virtue, it is worth the winning. It is not to be acquired by spasmodic fits of endeavor; but little by little, as day by day we faithfully do life's duties.

"Heaven is not reached by a single bound,
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to its summit round by round."

3. Again, the nature of man's conduct under trial, and the effect of trial upon him, depend upon his faith in the end of his trials, or in their ultimate purpose. "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience; but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Faith in the end is the key to all the noblest endurance of history. Read the thrilling romance of discovery and invention, and you will realize that that which

sustained those hardy heroes and pioneers in travel and thought, in the midst of indescribable trials, was faith in the end. Four hundred years ago, a bold Genoese sailor, a man of great faith, set out with a few companions on a long journey upon an unknown sea. After days and weeks of varied experience, the waves rough beneath them, the clouds black above them, with nought in their horizon but heaven and ocean, his companions become discouraged and disheartened. Faces become black with anger and fear. Murmurings, silent at first, become more open and pronounced. Dark despair broods over the ship; and at last mutiny, that terror of the sea, surges in every breast. In the midst of this scene of distress stands a man, firm and erect, with cheerful countenance and hopeful mien. No clouds of despondency play over his features; but, with keen eyes and an air of expectancy, he eagerly surveys the horizon before him. How is it that he seems not to heed the trials about him? What is it that enables him to endure so bravely the experience through which he is passing? He sees before him India. His eye of faith pierces the unknown expanse, and the end of his trials he sees to be a new passage round the world. Fifty years after, go with me to France and see a man who has been working patiently for sixteen years, amid great hardships, toward the realization of an idea. His resources are now well-nigh spent.

His furnace fires have devoured his substance, and in his extremity he begins to split up his furniture for fuel. His neighbors mock him. His wife derides him. His starving children plead with him. Death stares all in the face. Yet we see that this man, firm as a rock, strong in his determination, and buoyant in his expectancy, is moved by none of these things. Why? Because Bernard Palissy knew that if he could keep his furnace fires hot enough, he could produce the beautiful white enamel which he was seeking. Faith in the end made endurance possible. All down through history, from the beginning of time, the character of man's endurance of trouble has depended upon his faith in the end. Abraham journeyed from Ur of Chaldee into unknown parts, sustained by his faith in the Promised Land. Job rose above the afflictions which fell upon him, and triumphed over his friends by his sublime faith in the outcome of his trials, when he exultantly declared, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Stephen, when the stones came crashing in upon him, by faith saw Jesus and the home of the saints. Paul and Silas sang songs in the jail at Philippi. A host of martyrs welcomed the stake, bathed their hands in the flames, and joyfully endured the severest trials because of their faith in the end. Reformers and missionaries have furnished many examples of this principle. And who can doubt that one great

sustaining power in the life of suffering of Jesus himself was a clear view of the final purpose of his work, the salvation of the world? Our text suggests to us the final end of all our trials, in view of which we are cheerfully and patiently to endure the troubles through which we may be called to pass. It is perfection of character. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." Trial in the furnace of sorrow, when borne in the right spirit, will do for human character what the fire does for precious metals; it will burn away the dross, and bring out into clearer light that which is of real worth. How often have we seen the kinks of character removed by affliction! How often we have noticed that a broadness of living, a sympathy of thought and feeling, and a tenderness and gentleness of love and behavior have been wrought into a man's disposition by the hammer of discipline! Why was it necessary for the chosen people to pass through that severe bondage in Egypt? Why those forty years of trial in the wilderness? Why that checkered history of more than a thousand years? Why that Babylonish captivity? This was God's way of building a nation. This is the divine method of bringing about perfection, both in nations and in individuals. Why is it that God so often causes us to pass through these dark valleys? Why is it that sickness strikes us down and interrupts our

work; that disappointments cross our path; that many of our cherished plans are frustrated? Why? We believe that it is because God is training us. Life is a training school, and trials are our best teachers. The end of all is our highest welfare, our perfection of character. We shall acquire this in proportion as we allow patience to have her perfect work.

"Let us," then, "be patient. These severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise;
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise."

Further, let us recall that we have observed that patient endurance depends upon faith in the source and immediate purpose of afflictions, and faith in the end. It is pre-eminently a work of faith. Our sight is very limited.

"We see but dimly through the mists and vapors;
Amid these earthly damps,
What seem to us but sad, funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps."

We cannot see even a day before us, and life appears to our thoughts as made up of so many hours and minutes. We see nothing as a unit, or as a finality. We see only parts of things. Life to us is a mass of incompletions. Life is like climbing a series of ever-rising hills which lead up to a lofty mountain. We climb up the first hill, and when we have reached the top, we can see

nothing before us but a dark valley and perhaps a dimly rising hillside. We can see no more. All is veiled in fog and mist. We pass down through this valley, over a mountain stream, up the hillside, and attain the second height. Here, again, before us, we can see but a short distance, and that a valley and a crooked path; but, as we look back from this vantage point, we can see the way in which we have come, and begin to understand why it was that we must cross that valley and follow that winding road. On and on we go, through valley to hill-top; and, as we trudge along, the way behind us, over which we have come, begins to take definite form, and we begin to see that there has been a constant ascent; while before us the mist is lifting, and the mountain peak toward which we are striving becomes more plain. On and on we go, now ascending, now winding down a crooked path; again we begin to rise, and at last we reach the summit of the mountain peak. The glow of the noontide sun has now burst upon us. The mists are gone; and we wonderingly admire the beauty of the scene. As we gaze here and there, our thoughts are drawn to the place of our ascent. We trace with eager curiosity the windings of the path by which we have come to this magnificent height. And now, *now*, we understand the meaning of every step. We see that each winding of the road was necessary. Such is life. We can see

but a short distance before us. We pass into dark places and afflictions rise up before us and shut out the light of the world from us. A cent, when held close to the eye, appears larger than the universe. How much depends upon getting the proper point of view! Some years ago, while in a fine-art gallery in Europe, I stood one day before a famous picture. I gazed and gazed, and yet I could see no beauty there. Everything seemed to be jumbled. There was no order, no perspective, simply blotches of color. All at once the thought flashed across my mind, "Perhaps the fault is with me, and not with the picture." I stepped aside a few paces. No; it was of no use. I could find no beauty in those splashes of color. I was just about to leave the gallery, disgusted with myself and with the picture; when, as I reached the door, I turned about to take a final look. And now, behold! all seemed changed. Order had come out of disorder. Every object seemed to stand out in wonderful perspective, and before me was a scene of exquisite beauty. The picture was the same, but I had gotten the artist's point of view. Again, we have an illustration of life. When we get the divine perspective, we see things in their true relations. We often have the experience of seeing, in later years, that what we regarded at the time as a very bitter disappointment, a very hard providence, was, in fact, the greatest blessing which God

could at the time have bestowed upon us. Then we realize that every cloud had a silver lining, and that our sorrows were but blessings in disguise. Dear friends, life, with its so-called accidents and exigencies, when viewed from any standpoint but the right one, seems a meaningless jumble, an insolvable problem, a purposeless series of disconnected events. But when we get the divine point of view, when our faith pierces the mists, and sees the mountain peak as our goal, when every event in life is seen to be a part, and a necessary part too, of a great plan, when perfection of character is known to be the end of our trials; then these afflictions will appear as sorrows of a moment, and our patient endurance will work in us the perfection which God desires. Then, at all times, we may sing with the sainted P. P. Bliss:

"So on I go, not knowing,
I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light.
I'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight.
Where He may lead I'll follow,
My trust in Him repose,
And every hour in perfect peace
I'll sing 'He knows, He knows,'
I'll sing 'He knows, He knows!'"

Unity Amid Diversity Through Service

Philippians 2:1-5.—"If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

THE Christians at Philippi, to whom Paul addressed the letter in which these words occur, seem to have been guilty of no great heresy in doctrine, or gross irregularity in practice; but on the contrary to have been as nearly ideal as any company of converts that it had been Paul's privilege to gather. The mutual relations between preacher and people had ever been exceedingly cordial and pleasant. Indeed this very letter had been written by Paul from Rome

heartily to thank the Philippians for a recent manifestation of their Christian thoughtfulness, constancy and love, which they had sent to him by the hand of one of their members, Epaphroditus. Paul had learned, however, from Epaphroditus, who had remained throughout the winter in Rome, that there were two respects in which the Philippian church needed help and guidance. In the first place there was a tendency to deep discouragement over the long continued absence and imprisonment of their beloved apostle Paul; and, again, there was a lack of unity in spirit and work. To this second point I wish now specially to direct your attention.

The problem in the Philippian church was just this: how amid all of the diversity of individual members, with diverse heredity, tastes and dispositions, with diversity in their physical, financial, social and religious conditions—how, amid all of the wide diversity of personal peculiarities and preferences, to attain and maintain any practical unity of spirit and work? "Oh," you say, "that's just the trouble in our home! Father doesn't look at life just as mother does; brother sees everything from a different angle of vision from sister; everyone lives in his own individual world, and unity of spirit and work are sadly lacking." And another says, "Yes, that's the trouble in our choir." And another, "And in our club." And another, "And in our politics, both local and national; and among the nations of the world."

Yes! this is a world problem which we are considering this morning, and never was it so big a problem as it is today; how amid all of the diversity of individual tastes and temperaments in any company of persons to attain and maintain unity of spirit and work?

In the material universe it seems to be no problem at all, but in the moral realm what a serious question it is! In the physical world about us how beautiful is the unity amid diversity! What variety exists in the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds! What diversity in hill and dale, tree and shrub, flower and grass, land and water, sky and stars! How manifold are the forms of life! What diversity in color, shape and size! And yet, amid all this marvelous variety and wide diversity there are just a few elemental substances present, just a few simple laws operative, one mysterious principle of life. Not only is this true of the world upon which we live, but the telescope and the spectroscope reveal to us the startling fact that in the worlds which whirl about us the same elemental substances are present, the same laws operative; so that we may now seriously believe in the harmony of the universe, and the music of the spheres; amid all of the marvelous diversity there is unity. Not only in nature, but also in revelation we see an illustration of this truth. What diversity in the various portions of scripture! Diversity as to time, place, language, literary form, men, style and

themes; and yet there is, too, such a oneness of aim, such a consistency in teaching, such a unity in all the parts, that by general consent these various books have been bound together under one cover, and called pre-eminently "The Book;" unity amid diversity. In God Himself we have the same principle illustrated. What variety in representation! What unity in essence! We know his love and his wrath, his pity and his power; we know him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three yet one, three in one, amid diversity unity. In man, too, so far as his constituent nature is concerned we have another illustration of this thought of unity amid diversity. In the individual man we have body, mind, spirit; how diverse they are, and yet but one man! Again we have eye, ear, nose, hands, feet, muscle, bone, skin, tissue, "many members, yet one body," amid a wide diversity unity. So too, among the races of men what variety exists! Who has attended any world's fair and noted the representatives of many nations gathered from remote corners of the earth and not been impressed with this! What variety in size, color and character! Big and little; black, red, yellow and brown; good, bad and indifferent; different in customs, languages and laws! What a variety among the races of men! And yet, what an essential unity in form, in the laws of thought, feeling and volition; one psychology will do for all! So striking and real is the unity that we speak of

"human nature" and "the brotherhood of man." So much a unit is the race that Paul could say to a pagan audience at Athens: "He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." Amid all the diversity unity.

But in the moral world, in the sphere of the freedom of the will, we find a strong and constant tendency toward discord and divisions, questionings and quarrels. Through the abuse of man's free moral agency sin entered this world of ours, and man lost his garden of Eden. Pride and selfishness, enmity and strife, took possession of man. Cain quarreled with and killed his brother Abel, and the Cain-spirit of self-seeking became perpetuated in human history. Sweet Peace took her flight from earth and grim Discord the throne. From that sad day 'till this men and women have been out of tune with each other, and strife and contention have prevailed. Diversity and division have everywhere been manifest, but unity and harmony have seldom been found. The race in its various branches with strangely similar traditions has looked back with longing to a golden age of pristine peace, and its best prophets and poets have painted with brilliant pigments the heavenly harmonies of some millenial dawn; but wars and rumors of wars have drowned the music, and hope deferred has so often made the heart sick.

Yet the human heart will not give up its dream and its vision. Both political and religious history

reveal man's longing for unity amid diversity. Two kinds of political government have struggled with the problem side by side through the centuries: monarchy and its various modifications, and democracy in many forms. Monarchy has been an attempt to bring about unity amid diversity by concentrating power in the hands of a king, or, as in oligarchy, in the hands of a few. But such rule has produced unity, when it has been accomplished at all, only at the expense of diversity, only by the suppression of the individual. Democracy on the other hand has been an attempt to allow the largest possible development of diversity, the fullest freedom for the individual, and yet at the same time to attain and maintain unity. Until our forefathers came to the American continent, it seemed as if the verdict of history was all in favor of monarchy, and the belief seemed general that only thus could unity be preserved. But those stalwart men and women who laid deep the foundations of our nation had very different ideas from this. They desired to safeguard the development of the individual, and came to our shores impregnated with ideas of democracy. But when they met in their early assemblies, they found that it was a great problem to attain and maintain any unity amid such wide diversity. For the Yankees in New England had special interests that they wished guarded, and the Dutch in New York had their interests too, and the Quak-

ers in Pennsylvania had still diverse interests, while the Catholics in Maryland and the Cavaliers of Virginia each had their own peculiar concerns that must be jealously preserved. How amid all this diversity were they to attain and maintain unity? Finally, when England became the foe of all, a common interest united the colonies. It then became apparent that "United we stand, divided we fall;" "We must all hang together, or we'll all hang separately." This urgent necessity of union for the sake of self-preservation drove the colonies together, and the articles of federation which were finally adopted by the new nation provided for a central government for all of the states with certain inalienable rights preserved to each. The motto chosen by the young republic was "E pluribus Unum," out of many one, in the midst of diversity unity. And the whole monarchical world wondered at the bold experiment! For a few decades affairs went fairly well with the youthful nation, but there were many who saw and felt that there was a steady undercurrent which boded no good to the national life. At last the fatal "doctrine of states-rights" boldly asserted itself, and the great civil conflict burst upon us in all of its fearful fury. It cost us four years of wretched war and more than a million of men, to determine whether the nation should survive or "government of the people by the people and for the people" perish from the earth. But when the war

was over, there was still a North, and still a South. A quarter of a century more rolled along, and another schism threatened the nation, when over matters monetary the East was pitted against the West and the West against the East. Then, again, a common interest and war against a common national foe drove divisions into the background; and the Knickerbocker lieutenant-colonel and the ex-Confederate general rode side by side under the Stars and Stripes, while the rich young heir from the wealthy East and the wild cowboy from the growing West fought shoulder to shoulder for our espoused cause. And when the war was over, we found that there was no more an East or West, a North or South; and the union was soon cemented by the blood of that martyred President, a man of peace. Now as a mighty, united nation we have leaped into a foremost place among the nations of the world, and with no North, no South, no East, no West, but one flag, one people, one cause, and one country, we stand as the United States of America, the wonder of the whole world; a world that waits for us to demonstrate fully that unity amid diversity is possible through democracy.

Likewise two kinds of ecclesiastical government have struggled side by side in the solution of the problem of unity amid diversity: (1) Papacy, with Episcopacy and its various modifications; all of

which forms of church government are monarchical in their forms and tendencies: and (2) Congregationalism and Independency in its various forms, which are democratic in their nature. I do not care to stop at this time to argue in favor either of the one or of the other principle of civil or of ecclesiastical government; but it is imperative that we should note this fact, that the tendency today both political and religious seems to be irresistibly in the direction of democracy. Those nations which are still monarchical in form are becoming republican in fact. The Houses of Parliament rule England, not Edward VII. The voice of the people is being felt more and more even in monarchies and empires. So, too, in those churches which are Papal or Episcopal in form of government the democratic tendency is manifest. The lay element of the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches has constantly increasing power. The power of the preacher is no longer the power of an autocrat or of a patriarch. Once his word was law, and his theological deliverance was the end of dispute. Today every preacher addresses in his audiences a jury, which carefully weighs his every utterance and tests the truths set forth. In the family, too, the same democratic tendency appears. Once the word of parents was law; it was the reign of the aristocrat. Today, if there is any rule at all in our homes (and in many of them there is not) it is the reign of democracy; father

or mother call the children together and matters are talked over as before a congress; if the matter desired appears to be reasonable, it is done; otherwise not. Democracy is rampant everywhere! And democracy accentuates diversity! Never, then, in all the ages past was the problem of how to attain and maintain unity amid diversity so great a problem as it is today! And never was it more clear that Paul's recommendation to the Philippian Christians is the only practical and permanent solution of the problem: "Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (i. e. not living the selfish life but the social life). "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The mind of Christ will solve the problem, in the home, in the community, in the church, in the club, in politics, local or national, and among the nations of the world.

And do you ask "What was the mind of Christ"? It matters not whether we study his teachings or his life to discover the answer, for with him precept and practice were identical. He alone of all earth's teachers was the very embodiment of his doctrine. Let us look at some of his sayings. His first recorded utterance was: "I must be about my Father's business." Was this to live for self or for an end outside of self? Again he said, "The Son of Man

is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And again, "I am among you as one that serveth." And again, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me." It was written of him that "he went about doing good." What sort of a mind was that? Once he definitely described his heart-life when he said: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am———:" We knew from what John's gospel tells us that we have just a fragment of the teachings of Christ. Let us suppose for a moment that this familiar saying were among the sayings of Jesus unrecorded in our gospels, and that among some newly-discovered "Sayings of Jesus," found upon broken pieces of papyrus in Egypt, this saying was found. With what eagerness its words would be pondered by a weary, proud, unhappy, selfish and self-seeking, modern world! But, unfortunately, the parchment is broken and the one all-important word is illegible! "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am———in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." From what we know of

Jesus of Nazareth what words should we feel justified in supplying in the broken parchment? What was the mind of Christ? "For I am proud and haughty in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls?" Our master never could have said that! "For I am selfish in spirit, bound always to have my own way (and sooner or later I'll have it by hook or crook) and you shall find rest to your souls?" Our master never could have said that! What, then, was the mind of Christ? "For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." What is the symbol of Christianity? Is it a fiery altar of Molock? Is it the lofty throne of some haughty Assyrian king with piles of human heads at his feet, tokens of his cruel conquests? Is it the moving forward of the crushing car of the monster juggernaut? The symbol of Christianity is a cross of sacrifice and lowly, unselfish service. As the great Augustine said: "Humility is the first article of the Christian creed." "God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble." Christ had the wonderful power of transforming what ever he touched. He touched the shameful cross and it became a beautiful symbol of service; so that wherever that cross appears in all the world it suggests humble helpfulness. Christ came into the midst of a proud, domineering, Roman, Jewish, Greek world and transformed men's ideas of life until the very words they used became filled with

a new meaning. That Latin word *humilis* meant what was base and mean; Jesus so changed human thought that it now stands for what is beautiful and magnificent. He added a new virtue to the galaxy of human excellencies, and he wrote this new virtue at the very top. "He that is least among you shall be great." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This spirit of humble, unselfish service is the mind of Christ, and its supremacy in life would mean peace. What would not the mind of Christ do for our homes, our churches, our social life, our nation, our world? This old world of ours, ablaze with the grace and glory of God, were good enough for heaven, if only the spirit of the Christ were here!

But do you say, "I fear that, if this is the mind of Christ, I have little of it? I am proud and selfish, I love to have my own way; I fear that I am not as good a Christian as I have sometimes considered myself; how can I get this mind of Christ?" Only by an acceptance of his principles of life and through fellowship with himself. It is well nigh axiomatic today that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and "we become like that with which we associate and tend to approximate our ideal." Let anyone accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior and constant Friend, taking his principles as the ideal of life, and he cannot long let pride and selfishness rule his life. Low ideals and a lack of proper standard

of life are the cause of much of our pride and self-complacency. The dirty, ragged, street urchin, so long as he is among other dirty, ragged boys, is just as proud and self-satisfied as ever: but put him in the midst of a company of clean, well-dressed boys and he at once becomes conscious of every spot and of every rent. When the whole world crowned the Swedish Nightingale "Queen of Song," Jenny Lind did not become proud and selfish. Why? Because of her high ideal. Because after her every triumph she but prayed the more passionately, "Oh, Lord, if only some day I may learn to sing well enough that Thou mayest think me worthy of even the lowest place in the heavenly choir!" Phillips Brooks gave the true prescription for humility when he suggested that it was to be found not in a morbid self-inspection nor in a studied self-abasement, but in the finding of the largest possible personage, large of body, brain and heart, and in measuring ourselves to our full capacity up against such an one. Measure yourself up against the full stature of the manhood of Jesus Christ, and see how small you are! Before Saul of Tarsus met Jesus of Nazareth he was a proud, conceited, factious Pharisee; but how mightily he was changed! And the longer he associated with Christ the humbler he became! After he had been walking and talking with Jesus for only a few years Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth and

said: "For I am *the least of the apostles,* who am not worthy to be an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." After a few more years of fellowship with Christ this same Paul wrote to friends at Ephesus: "To me, who am *less than the least of the saints,* was this grace given." And then, toward the end of his earthly life, after many years of communion with Jesus, we find him writing to a young friend by the name of Timothy: "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners, of whom I am chief.*" What progress he made in humility! "Least of the apostles!" "Less than the least of the saints!" "The chief of sinners!" He was not, of course, a bigger sinner in fact at the end of his life than at the beginning; but his sense of the sinfulness of sin and his own deep needs increased with the years: as he grew in holiness, he advanced in humility. So must it ever be with those who associate with Christ. The longer we fellowship with him the more truly we shall appreciate our own needs and the more strongly we shall feel the call to humble, unselfish service.

Two kinds of people make up society. One kind are proud, selfish, contentious, hard to get along with, pushing for prominence. Their motto is "Get all you can, and keep all you get." It is needless to say that, whatever their profession, these have not the mind which was in Christ Je-

sus. There is another class of people in the world. You will find them everywhere. There are more of them than perhaps you at first would suppose. They are humble, unselfish, peaceable and peacemakers, easy to get along with, seeking to serve. Their motto is "Give all you can; and in your getting get all you can that you may have the more to give." It is unnecessary to say that these, and these alone, have the mind that was in Christ Jesus. These are the real followers of Christ, whatever their creed or form.

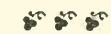
Do you ask again, "How can I, a poor, weak, proud, selfish soul get this mind of Christ?" There is but one answer. Accept him fully as your personal Savior and intimate friend, fellowship constantly with him, saturate your mind and heart with his ideas and ideals, engage in the service that engrossed his soul, and you will not long continue to be proud, selfish and factious. A praying mother in Duluth had long besought the throne of grace in behalf of her sailor boy. Jack was a fighter, always in a scrimmage with some one, self-assertive and hard to get along with, his hand against every man. But finally one day he promised his mother that when his ship got to Buffalo he would go over to Toronto and see the celebrated picture "Christ Before Pilate." When he arrived at the place of exhibition, he gruffly asked: "Is Jesus Christ in there?" "If you mean the famous painting 'Christ Before

Pilate,' that is inside the tent, and the admission is fifty cents," replied the doorkeeper. Jack roughly threw down a coin, shuffled into the tent, brushed the descriptive circular upon the grass, and lounged into a chair; he felt mean, and out of sorts with everybody. After a little he recalled his promise to his mother, and remembered why he was there. Then he began to look at the painting. He looked at proud Pilate sitting upon his imperial throne. He looked at the haughty Pharisees who stood or sat about as accusers. He looked at the miscellaneous crowd that filled the judgment hall, and noted the scornful attitude of that one with mocking mouth and hands aloft: but none of these things moved him. Then his eyes were irresistibly drawn to and riveted upon that central figure in white, the meek and lowly one, who stood quietly behind the outstretched spear; and, as he looked, the story of the Christ, heard so often at his mother's knee, slowly came back to him. As he continued to look, he took off his hat, he knew not why; he picked up the descriptive circular, which he had so roughly brushed off upon the grass; he straightened himself up in the chair, where he had been so slovenly sitting. And still he looked. He brushed off his clothes; he straightened his tie; he smoothed his hair. And still he looked. And then, overcome at last by the story of the Christ, he bowed his face in his hands and wept like a child. When Jack left

that scene he was a changed man. No longer would his life be self-assertive, pushing for prominence; but humble, seeking to serve. No sinking Peter can keep his eyes fixed upon Jesus and go down beneath Galilee's waves. Nor can anyone daily fasten his gaze upon the Christ, and remain a haughty, selfish division-maker. The mind of Christ is a sure and the only principle of permanent peace, and just to the extent that it dominates the individual, the family, the club, the church, the state, the nations of the world, will there come the much desired unity amid diversity. Then will poet's dream and prophet's vision begin to be realized. Then will heaven's glad anthem that burst over Bethlehem's Babe when the Prince of Peace was born, be echoed back from a Paradise Regained, "There is peace upon earth, good will among men." To this end let each one of us seek the mind of Christ and pray, "Thy kingdom come."

"When the war drum throbs no longer
"And the battle flags are furled,
"In the parliament of man,
"The federation of the world."

The Best Thing in the World



Matt. 13:44-46.—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

AS one passes along a thoroughfare of any of our cities, and notices the people with eager faces thronging hither and thither, the question often arises, "What is it that each one is seeking so earnestly? What is that thing of such high value as to be worthy of such a relentless pursuit?" Some are seeking pleasure, some wealth, some wisdom, some power. All of them are in pursuit, directly or indirectly, of something which they regard as a good thing, the winning of which would result in personal gain. But the ends at which they are aiming are so various, and differ so much in actual value. Some are high, some

are low, some are of great worth, some are valueless; and the old question recurs again and again, "What is the best thing in the world?" What is that thing supremely desirable, for the attainment of which it were well, if necessary, to lose all things else? What is the chief good, the *summum bonum*, as the ancients called it? Is there, after all, some one thing which, for all people, irrespective of age, sex or condition, is of highest value? If so, what is it, and how can we obtain it?

1. Various answers have been given to this first question, "What is the chief good?" These answers have differed one from another as the answers to a corresponding question have been different. That probably is the greatest good for each one of us which will hinder and destroy that which causes us the most harm. Tell me what you regard as the greatest evil of existence, and I can readily determine what you think to be the greatest good. Let us recall some of the things that have been and are regarded by men as of supreme worth.

It is thought by many that the greatest evil of existence is physical evil. That sickness and suffering, bodily disease and decay are the essence of human ills. Corresponding with this view of evil is the view that physical health is the greatest blessing which any individual can possess. To be sound in body, and to remain so, is to have

the chief good. Led on by this idea, Ponce de Leon, an old man, rich but weakened with age, set out on the 27th of March, 1513, from Porto Rico, with three caravels to cross again the wide Atlantic, in search of the longed for "Fountain of Perpetual Youth," which Spanish folk-lore said was situated in the islands beyond the sea. When, after days of westward sailing, they sighted the southeastern shore of our continent, at that time green and beautiful to the water's edge, their enthusiasm rose to the highest pitch, and in their delight they named the place "Florida," "the land of flowers." Surely, such a bower of bloom and beauty could only be fertilized by a fountain of perpetual youth. Surely, in such a haven health and strength would be permanent. You recall how expectantly Ponce de Leon and his men explored the woods and searched the valleys, hopefully bathing in every stream and eagerly drinking of every spring, in search of the waters of immortality. But, alas! they were never found. De Leon returned to Porto Rico, a broken-down and disappointed man, only to die of wounds received on his fruitless journey. Health of body, freedom from pain, must always be indeed a great boon. Farthest is it from my thoughts to underestimate its real worth. It is a gift of God to be devoutly grateful for, to be guarded with zealous care. But it is not the supreme good. There is some-

thing of higher value than this. It is possible for one to enjoy for many years practically perfect health, and yet miss entirely the supreme good. There is something better, to gain which it were profitable, if necessary, even to lose this so-called chief good.

In other days there were those who openly avowed that the greatest good is pleasure, whose motto was, "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die"—Epicureans, who thought the greatest good in life was just to have a good time. Even in this age of Christian civilization and enlightenment there seem to be many followers of this ancient, heathen philosophy. But it has always been true, that those who have sought happiness in itself as the chief good, have always ended by being themselves most miserable; having found that this, which was supposed to be the chief good, was in truth but a deceptive dream. The writer of Ecclesiastes presents to us one who gave himself up unreservedly to having a good time, and who drank to the full of every pleasure possible, even to a king of limitless resources and unbridled appetites; but at the end of his full round of pleasure, when he had tasted all of her sweets, he sadly but wisely wrote, "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." It is also worthy of note that the so-called "school of pleasure" never yet has produced a really great man.

Again, men have said that the greatest of all ills is financial distress; that poverty is the mainspring of human woe, and that, correspondingly, the greatest good is money, wealth. This seems to be the prevailing idea in the minds of many Americans to-day. We are said to worship the "Almighty Dollar." This we believe to be a libel upon the American people. But we see also much ground for the accusation in the eagerness to amass fortunes and in the materialistic direction taken by so much of our endeavor. Wealth, however, cannot be the greatest boon, for in many cases it proves to be the greatest of curses, and those who have the most of it seldom regard themselves as most fortunate. Xerxes, with all of his wealth of armies, fleets and countless gold, was far from happy, and offered a prize to the inventor of some new pleasure. Men in all ages have sought to find the chief good in wealth, only to be disappointed. And one, whose authority has never been questioned, has said, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And of another, who had amassed great wealth and felt that he had the greatest good, it was said, "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Again, it has been said that power, or conquest,

is the greatest good. We have seen an Alexander, driven by this thought, sweep over a whole world with restless might, conquering everything before him. And yet, when he had been uniformly successful and was without a foe resisting, we are told that he "sat down and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer." Surely, that which is of highest worth, when won, should be all-satisfying.

Others have said that ignorance is the cause of the greatest evil, and that knowledge must, consequently, be the greatest good. In all ages of the world there have been those of higher perception who have felt that knowledge is the greatest of all boons. The student spends years of hardest toil in pursuit of this great good. Men and women of great perseverance and faith have spent a lifetime of active research in the attempt to add something to the volume of knowledge. Surely, this is a noble aim; this is a lofty conception of life. But knowledge in itself cannot be the supreme good in life. I recall that Socrates prayed: "O, Pan, make me to know that he is rich who is wise"; and, though this must ever be regarded as a very high ideal, yet there was a greater teacher than Socrates in view of whose teachings even this high conception must be regarded as falling short of the highest. Thus we have seen a few of the answers that have been given to the question, "What is the chief good?"

Is it health? Is it pleasure? Is it wealth? Is it power? Is it knowledge? Men have answered the question so differently. Is it a question, after all, of real importance?

2. A radical difference between man and the lower animals is that lower animals always act by instinct, while the acts of man are put forth in view of a rational choice. The horse eats, sleeps, and spends its time in various ways, not in view of any ultimate end at which it has arrived by a course of reasoning, but impelled by the inborn laws of its own existence which we call instinct. It does not live according to any plan, or in view of any final purpose. Man, however, is a reasoning animal, and acts in view of certain ends to be attained. True it is that some, whom by courtesy we call men, do not seem to have any aim in existence, and do not live under the impulse of any end to be attained, people who seem to drift here and there as the tide ebbs or flows. But even they, in the final analysis, are seen to act always, consciously or unconsciously, in view of certain ends to be attained. It may be, indeed, a very ignoble one, as the gambler's aim, to get as much as possible for nothing; or the tramp's, to do as little work as possible. Or man's final purpose, in conscious or unconscious view of which all of his acts are put forth, may be a noble impulse, which drives him on with terrible zeal, and will

not let him rest, until the end desired has been achieved.

Now, the determining of the question, "What is the best thing in life?" will have a very decided influence in determining what the final purpose of one's life shall be. Moreover, whatever becomes the final purpose of one's life will become the determining factor in all of one's thoughts, feelings and actions. It will determine the employment of one's time; will give direction to one's endeavors; will mould one's habits and determine one's character; and character here will determine destiny hereafter. As some one has so truly said:

> "Sow a thought, you reap a deed;
> Sow a deed, you reap a habit;
> Sow a habit, you reap a character;
> Sow a character, you reap a destiny."

The determining, then, of what is the best thing in the world is the settlement of a question of supreme importance, a question of far-reaching results, a question which determines character and destiny.

Sad would it be for us, if we were left in such an important matter to the conflicting opinions of men simply, men who have differed so widely as to what is of supreme worth. Fortunate indeed are we that we have a higher court, a court of ultimate appeal, a tribunal whose authority

trustworthiness and honor have never been impeached, a teacher of whom even his enemies said, "No man ever so spake."

In view, then, of the conflicting opinions of men, in view of the supreme importance of the question, we refer it for final solution to the great teacher come from God, the Christ of Nazareth.

3. To the unerring mind of Christ, to him who was the light of the world, to him who was the way, the truth and the life, all things appeared as they really are. He alone saw with undimmed vision, and declared the fact, that the greatest evil of existence is not physical evil, not poverty of pocket, limitation of power, or ignorance of mind, but domination of self and selfishness; that the great sickness of the world, and of each individual in it, is sin, which is the expression of selfishness; that the great need of each individual is to be freed from the dominion of self and sin. Accordingly, he came not as the deliverer from the dominion of Rome, for that was not the great need. He came to deliver mankind from themselves. In accord, then, with the chief purpose of his divine mission, in two of his parables Christ set forth the truth concerning what was of supreme worth. He taught that the chief good, the thing to be won, even at the loss of all things else, if necessary, the thing of supreme value to every person, irrespective of age, sex or condition, the thing worthy of supreme regard, was the

kingdom of heaven; not referring in these sayings to the kingdom of heaven as an external, visible society, as that reign of equity and peace which shall ultimately subdue the world and usher in a new order of things, a new heaven and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness; not having in mind, I take it, this aspect of the kingdom of heaven so much as the idea of the kingdom of heaven as an internal, individual possession, the kingdom of heaven within every man's heart, the result of Christ's purifying and peace-giving presence.* This kingdom of heaven, as an individual possession, is the greatest individual good; this is the thing of supreme value. Christ said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found and hid, and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." And, again, in calling attention to the superlative value of the kingdom, he said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Not only in these two parables, but in other striking teachings of the Savior the same truth is emphasized. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Why first? First in time

*In this Sermon and in "Gradual Growth" the author desires to express his great obligations to the writings of Prof. A. B. Bruce.

and first in importance, because it is of supreme worth. Again, he said, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God," i. e., even the most sacred rites and ceremonies are to be held in less esteem than the kingdom of God. It alone is of supreme value. "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." It deserves undivided allegiance, and should be held in highest regard. And again, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Christ and his kingdom alone are worthy of the highest place. There can be no doubt, then, from these parables and sayings, as to the mind of the Master regarding the chief good.

Let us note, in passing, to what in these two parables our Master likens this chief good. In the first parable it is likened unto a treasure hid in a field, and in the second to a pearl of great price. Both of these comparisons are, at first thought, rather surprising. Why liken this greatest of all blessings to a treasure hid in a field? Is there, then, no more probability of one obtaining it than of one finding a hid treasure? Then, indeed, most of us would best give up the quest at once And why compare this greatest good to so common a jewel as a pearl? Surely the diamond, the largest of diamonds, rather than a

pearl of great price, would be a more appropriate parallel. But in both of these queries we have lost sight of a very important consideration which must always be kept in view when interpreting the Bible. While the Bible, under the far-reaching providence of God, was intended as a book for all times and all places, and as a revelation of God's will to all peoples in every age of the world, yet it arose out of historical situations. Its peculiar forms of thought and illustration were moulded with reference, primarily, to the forceful teaching of the original hearers and readers. And we must remember that while it is the Bible for the world, it is also peculiarly oriental, and has the ear-marks of the ages which form its background. Christ was speaking to an oriental audience in the first century of this era. The hiding of treasure in a field, or in the caverns of the hill-side, in that time and place of frequent robberies, when banks, safety deposit vaults and sure investments were not known, was a very common way of concealing valuables, and the chance finding of such hidden treasure was also a common occurrence. And the fact of the treasure being hid is but an evidence of its value as being worth hiding. Again, the diamond, which, in our day, is the usual symbol of priceless value, was, in the times of Christ, comparatively unknown, and the pearl occupied as a symbol of value a similar place in the oriental mind to the

diamond in ours. You recall that the lavish display of wealth made by Cleopatra reached its culmination in pearls of magnificent worth, some of which were estimated at a value equal to $500,000 of our money. When she wished to manifest her reckless devotion to Antony, it was priceless pearls that were so rashly sacrificed. Had Christ in his day compared the supreme worth of the kingdom of heaven to the worth of a priceless diamond, he would have used an illustration wholly beyond the comprehension of his hearers, the common people. There is, then, no doubt as to the teaching of Christ concerning the greatest good. The thing of supreme worth to every individual is the kingdom of heaven as an individual possession, the result of the purifying and peace-giving presence of Jesus in the believer's soul. Not health of body, not pleasure, not wealth, not power, not knowledge even; none of these things is the chief good, but the kingdom of God incarnated in the individual. This is the one thing of supreme worth, the one thing of highest value to every person, irrespective of age, sex or condition.

4. This is the chief good, but many do not so regard it. In the parables of the Sower and of the Great Supper, Christ clearly set forth the attitude of many toward the kingdom. Some, the wayside hearers, are entirely indifferent to its worth. Some, the stony ground hearers,

impulsively seize upon it; but their emotion, supported by no depth of conviction, does not long continue, and the chief good soon disappears from view. Others, the thorny ground hearers, take it into their lives, but fail to recognize that it must have supreme and absolute control; other things are given a greater or less degree of allegiance, and, sooner or later, these other and antagonistic things dethrone the chief good and drive it out from any practical control of the life. But others there are, the good ground hearers, who regard the kingdom as the one supreme thing, the one thing of superlative worth, deserving of highest place and absolute loyalty. These make Christian character the one end of life, and they alone succeed in making the kingdom truly their own. Again, in the parable of the Great Supper, the Master taught how men are continually putting other things less worthy in the place of the chief good. This chief good is represented as a great feast and many are invited. But one regards the land which he has recently purchased of more importance; a second one considers his yoke of oxen more valuable; while a third much prefers the company of his newly married wife. All of these things were good in themselves, but the feast should have been the thing of supreme moment. And to-day there are many people absorbed in things that in themselves are all right, but which, when they take

the place that belongs to the chief good, become a curse instead of a blessing. One of the most important lessons of life is to learn to keep things in their proper place, to put that first which ought to be first, and never to let that which is of secondary importance get our primary allegiance. And we need so to live and to learn and to pray, that we may have an undimmed vision of that which is of highest value, and that we may keep that thing of highest worth as our one chief aim.

5. The true attitude of every man toward this greatest good is taught by Christ in the parables read at the beginning of the hour. The man who found the hidden treasure and perceived that this was the most valuable thing, gladly went and sold all that he had and bought the field; while he that found the pearl of great price disposed of all his other pearls in order to obtain this one, which he saw was better than all others. This is the attitude demanded of all who would make this kingdom their own. The promise is, "Ye shall seek me and ye shall find me, when ye search for me with all your heart." The answer given to the rich young man, who worshiped his wealth and who desired to know what he must do to inherit the kingdom, was, "Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Whatever stands in the way must be sacrificed. Other idols must be dethroned. This is the price which must be paid

for the kingdom. A large factor in determining the worth of an article is the cost of production, and this highest good, Christian character, is the most costly of all products. It cost the Son of God an infinite price, paid with his own precious blood, that it might become possible for us. It will cost us a lifetime of self-denial and devotion before we make it fully our own. Let no one suppose that this in any way contradicts the freedom of God's offer of salvation. We are saved by grace; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should glory; and yet we are urged to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. We are freely made sons of God through faith in Christ; but we need also to grow in grace and in the knowledge of his will, and to strive to attain to the fullness of the stature of men and women in Christ. If we are to attain to full Christian manhood, we need to put the kingdom first. We need to be willing to sacrifice all other things to this one supreme end. We need to put out of our lives all things which hinder, in any way, the winning in the fullest sense this supreme good. We need to subordinate and bring under the demands of Christian character all other pursuits, the acquisition of wealth, the pursuit of pleasure, the winning of fame, or the getting of knowledge. We must first be Christians, then learned law-

yers, successful doctors, wealthy merchants and honored workers in other lines as calling and industry may permit. What the church and the world need to-day above all things else is men and women who will put Christian character first. To-day the striking spectacle is witnessed of thousands of men seeking places, and thousands of places seeking men. There are plenty of places and plenty of applicants; but there are so few men and women. Over the door of every profession and vocation in life there has always been a standing advertisement: "Wanted, Men." Not dwarfs, not pigmies, not lopsided freaks; but well-developed, symmetrical men. Men with large hearts as well as heads, trained to feel and to act as well as to think. Men who are larger than their professions, who care more for character than reputation, more for integrity than honor, more for manhood than money. Whatever, then, is your profession or occupation in life, be it to handle "plow or plane, the pick or the pen," be it humble or high, prominent or obscure, whatever your occupation, make Christian manhood your business. Be willing, in seeking this highest good, to act as men in other lines act, when they are pursuing what they falsely suppose to be of highest worth. Let us give ourselves unreservedly to it. Let us make it the passion of our lives. Pursue it with unflagging zeal. Give it

the devotion of a Nathan Hale, who nobly said, "I regret that I have but one life to give to my country." Pursue it with the perseverance of a Paul, who said, "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!" If, then, we make Christian character the chief end of life, and pursue it with the diligence and devotion that it deserves, the days spent here will be a joy and a blessing to ourselves and to others; and over yonder there will be a larger and fuller development of the life which here was only begun.

"Wanted Men!
Not systems fit and wise;
Not faiths with rigid eyes;
Not wealth in mountain piles;
Not power with gracious smiles;
Not even the potent pen;
Wanted Men!"

Christ the Motive Power

2 *Cor. 5:14.*—"*For the love of Christ constraineth us*" (*impels us, drives us on*).

ONE of the most interesting and far-reaching questions in the wide-awake, scientific world of to-day is the question of motive power. What force, what power is best adapted to turn the wheels of manufacture, to whirl our trains across the continent, to speed our ships over the seas and to drive our cars through the streets of our rapidly growing cities? What force is to furnish the enginery of civilization? This is now the great question in the scientific world.

Likewise, in the moral world as well as in the physical world, the great question from the beginning of time has been the question of motive power. What force, what power is sufficient to reach down and take hold of weak, selfish, sin-cursed men and women, living in the malarial swamps of evil, and lift them up to a higher, purer plane of life? What force is sufficient to enable man to break the bonds of self and to get free from the toils of sin?

Various systems of philosophy and religion have been offered as a cure for the ills of sin, and as a sufficient inspiration to a higher, better life. The main difference between them has been a difference of motive power, and their failure or partial success has been due to the inefficiency or the partial sufficiency of the motive power provided. In the far-reaching providence of God, these systems have been allowed or inspired to prove their own insufficiency, and to prepare the way for the only religion which ever has been offered, or would be offered with a motive power adequate for the purpose. Three great nations of antiquity preceded the coming of Christ, and each in its own, or rather in God's own way, prepared the way for his coming. Each of them offered a motive power to a higher life, which proved defective, and which only made more manifest to the world the world's need of some thing better. Consider, then, with me this morn ing three huge failures and one magnificent success:

THREE HUGE FAILURES

1. Greece: The God of Greece was culture. The Greeks tried to furnish in the cultivation of the intellect a motive power sufficiently strong to uplift and save man. The sense of "the noble, the beautiful and the true," aroused in man, was to restrain him from the shame, ugliness and

falsity of sin. Proper perception of the real worth of things would be a motive sufficient to lead a man to choose the better and to reject the worse. But should the question arise, "How arouse this saving sense of 'the noble, the beautiful and the true'?" how give men a proper perception of the real worth of things? The answer the Greek gave was, "By education." The highest representative of this idea was Socrates, who through his pupil, Plato, has given us a most profound attempt to uplift and save the race.

Plato believed in a personal, self-conscious, supreme Being, a God; but a God afar off, entirely beyond the ken of man, surrounded with mystery and himself unknowable. But side by side with this far-off, unknowable God was a world of patterns, models, divine ideals, according to which all visible things in this material world of ours are formed, and of which models the visible world is but an imperfect copy. Now and then, Plato believed, there is a man of acute mental perception, of keen spiritual insight, a philosopher perhaps, who is caught up to a third heaven, as it were, upon the wings of inspiration, and from this mountain top is given a sight, a vision of these patterns, models, forms of the divine mind, of which our world is the imperfect copy. This beatific vision would be forever afterwards an inspiration to draw him to higher

things. This was a beautiful conception of Plato's, but alas! it had two serious defects. This vision at best lasted but a moment, and was not long enough continued, nor oft enough repeated to prove a lifetime inspiration. And then, too, only those of keenest intellect could have this vision. No provision was made for the salvation of the average man. Only a very few at the most could ever be saved. And so the best that Greece, the best that culture, could do, failed to change the life, to restrain from sin, or to renew the heart.

2. Rome: The God of Rome was law. The fundamental trait of Roman character was reverence for authority, and a habit of absolute obedience. This was the developing principle in the formation of the national life. To the Roman boy, the father of the family was the expression of absolute authority (the Roman father had the power of life and death over his children); when the boy became a man, the state bore to him a similar relation. He in Rome was most virtuous, most excellent, who advanced in the highest degree the welfare of the state; and since conquest was the prevailing aim of the state, personal bravery and military prowess became the chief good. This for a time produced a sturdy type of character, the valiant Roman. But as soon as the state itself became corrupt, as soon as the fathers themselves became weaklings, reverence for law and authority died, and Rome

rotted. External law proved insufficient to change the life, to restrain from sin, or to renew the heart.

3. The Jews: Again, the Jewish people were given by God a special capacity for religion, and were taken by him to be the chosen medium of revelation by means of the preparatory system of Judaism. Judaism was a religion largely of externals; of rites and ceremonies; pictures, to be sure, of high spiritual realities, but not given as a final religion, or as an ultimate solution of the question of moral motive power. It was only preparatory. In the far-reaching providence of God, it was used to demonstrate the insufficiency of the blood of bulls and goats, as an offering for sin, and of external rites and ceremonies, as a motive power to uplift to holiness, no matter how grand, imposing and awe-inspiring these rites and ceremonies might be. The law was, as Paul has told us, only a school-master to lead us unto Christ. It was never intended as a sufficient motive power to change the life, to restrain from sin, or to renew the heart.

Thus was the world prepared by three great failures to witness the fact of one magnificent success.

ONE GREAT SUCCESS

In the fullness of time Christ came to an expectant but sin-beclouded world. To a world

that had witnessed the failure of culture, the height of attainment of law, and the impotence of ritual; to a weary, disappointed, sin-enslaved world, needing, oh! so sadly, some mighty motive power which should come down with the omnipotence of God, and lift up fallen and falling humanity to a higher, purer air. To such a world, God came in the person of Jesus Christ. God, not now "The Unknowable," far removed beyond the ken of man; not a God of Mystery enshrined in a secret Holy of Holies, and approached only through symbolic sacrifices and clouds of incense; but God manifest in the flesh—God with us, Immanuel, in human form, with human sympathies, and in intimate relationship with men. And as Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, "went about doing good," he said to those who had failed to find elsewhere a sufficient force to uplift, "Follow me"; and to those wearied by futile efforts to find release from self and sin, "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." To the darkness of the world he said, "I am the light of the world." To those seeking truth he said, "I am the way, the truth and the life"; and speaking of the power which his life and death were to have in the world, he said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will

draw all men unto me." Three and a half years were thus spent in intimate contact with men, during which he continually referred to himself as the one source of light and life. And when, at the end of his earthly ministry in the flesh, he hung upon the cross; when Greece with culture, and Rome with external law, and the Hebrews with ritual had failed to save; in the day of his apparent defeat, but of his real victory, these three great nations of antiquity bore unwilling witness to their own insufficiency and to his almightiness, when, over that cross on Golgotha, it was written in Greek, in Latin, and in Hebrew, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Here is a motive sufficient. Here is power. Here is the King. Three days he lay in the grave, after which he arose from the dead, because the tomb could no longer hold him. During the space of forty days he showed himself alive to his brethren, and talked with them concerning the things of the Kingdom; and when at last he left for a time their mortal vision, he said, "Go, carry on my work in my strength, for lo, I (in the person of the Holy Spirit) am with you all the days." So they went forth to their work, walking and talking with Jesus, living and working daily in constant and conscious communion with the Spirit, and under the impetus of his love for them and their love for him. So also Paul, having been converted at the sight of this same Jesus, was

consumed with love for him; was driven on from place to place in zealous activity and service; impelled by a personal, passionate attachment for Christ. In his second letter to the Corinthians he explains the secret of his zeal by the words of the text, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sake died and rose again." Here, then, is the motive power, "The love of Christ."

Thus we see that the power of Christianity was not to be the power of a creed, nor the power of a ritual, nor even (I say it reverently) the power of a book; but the power of a person. Christ in us. The source, center and goal of Christianity is Christ. Christ is Christianity. Strange is it that a part of the church should have for so long a time lost sight of this fact, and buried the Christ under ritual and creed and ceremony. A hopeful sign is it for church and college and the world, when from all sides in these thoughtful days, when men are trying to find the secret of our lack of power; a hopeful sign is it, when high theologians and humble evangelists, devout students and a hungry church, all unite in the agonizing cry, "Back to Christ, give us Christ, we must re-discover Christ!" To those who inquire, "Why is not the church more powerful? why are

so many Christians without power?" the sorrowful answer of Mary is heard in reply, "Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him." The person of Christ is the motive power in Christianity. Personality is always power and the only real power. The history of the world reveals the power of personality. The history of the world is but the history of a few great men. History is mostly biography. Men make history. The history of missions reveals the power of personality. The history of education bears witness to the same fact, the power of persons. The history of revelation reveals the same fact. The Bible is not an abstract statement of theology. A large part of the Bible is history; much of it simply biography. God has revealed truth through men. Men live truth, thus truth becomes alive and powerful, because personal. So in Christianity, the center and source of power is the Person of Jesus Christ.

THE POWER OF CHRIST

1. Now, the power of Christ depends first upon his character and work. The amount of power which any one has in this world, other things being equal, is in proportion to the purity and sincerity of one's life. Dear friends, young and old, let us never forget this. You and I will have power in this world, other things being equal, to

the degree that our lives are pure and sincere. In proportion as these elements of purity and sincerity are lacking, power will be lacking. Let us recall the purity and sincerity of the life of Christ. He could always meet the opposition of his foes with the brave challenge, "Who convicteth me of sin?" It is sincerity that gives courage and power. The insincere man is always a coward. "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." Christ could teach the highest precepts with absolute authority, because his practice always accorded with his precepts. He was the most influential teacher that ever lived, not simply on account of the substance of his teaching, but because he was the only teacher who ever lived whose life was equal to his highest precepts. There is something irresistibly attractive in real goodness, and Christ by the power of his purity and the sincerity of his life has ever been winning new friends to himself.

And then not only the purity and sincerity of his life gave him power, but also the character of his work gave him great power. His whole life was unselfish, his whole work was for others, a life of unselfish devotion to the good of men. He it was who made it clear that he is greatest who serves most his fellows, he is most powerful who suffers most for others' good. Gratitude has always been a most powerful basis of appeal, and Christ gained power over men by

doing things for men. The most significant comment upon his life ever written was, "He went about doing good." He put men under obligation to himself by the favors which he did them; while his crowning work of sacrifice of self upon the cross for men's sins, must ever be a source of tremendous power. Christ's resurrection also from the dead and the power of an eternal life have given him a great hold upon men. We do not worship a dead Christ, but a living Christ. Buddha in leaving his followers at his death did indeed with sadness say, "Your teacher you will no longer have, but I will leave you my teachings." But Christ, when about to depart for a time from mortal vision, triumphantly said, "Lo, I am with you alway." He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and through us he still pleads with men.

2. But the power of the person of Christ depends not simply upon his character and work, but also upon the intimacy and character of the relationship established between himself and men. This relationship was of the most intimate kind. In Christ we have not Plato's God, afar off and unknowable; not a God "sitting on the outer rim of the Universe and watching it spin," but God in intimate relationship and sympathy with men. He took upon himself all of man's limitations; he was tempted and tried in all points like as we are; he entered into every

human experience, tasted the joys and sorrows common to the race. He literally put himself into man's place, and lived as a man among men. And then he said to his followers, "I call you not servants, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." "My Father and I desire to live on very close terms with you; we desire to come in and sup with you and abide with you, and we desire you to abide with us. The bond of love is to be the tie between us." Ah! here was a motive power indeed! Cold, critical culture never saves anybody. Never has, never will, never can. We are apt sometimes to think, or to wish, that the world might be ruled by reason, or logic; but 'tis not so, 'twill never be so. Life is greater than learning; heart is mightier than head; love is stronger than logic. And the poet has done well to sing:

> "Ah, how skillful grows the hand
> That obeyeth love's command!
> 'Tis the heart and not the brain
> That to the highest doth attain;
> And he who followeth Love's behest
> Far excelleth all the rest."

Here, then, in our text Paul has given us the secret of power in Christianity, "The love of Christ constrains us." Christ's love for us, as shown in his self-denying life and sacrificial death; and our love for him, aroused by his own

moral worthiness, the benefits conferred and the kindnesses done, must ever be the motive power, the driving force, which impels us by love's own sweet compulsion to more and more zeal in his service, and to efforts for those for whom he died. Here, then, in such a personality, and in such a bond of relationship, is a mighty motive power, the best that God in his wisdom and mercy could provide; but somehow we don't seem to have in our churches the power which we should have. You have not in your church the power you ought to have. Why is it? In what does the power of a church consist? The power of a church is the sum total of the personal powers of each of the members, plus that increment of power which comes from union. Just this; no more, no less. You, then, individually are responsible for a part of the lack of power. You, then, individually are able to add to the power by increasing the power of your own Christian life. This may be done in two ways. First, we must come into more intimate relationship with Christ, the source of power. We need to get full of God's spirit, and then we'll have influence, then we'll have power. We need to be on fire for God. We must remove from our lives those things which hinder our growth in grace, which interfere with our freedom in prayer and in service; those selfish indulgences, those un-Christlike things, which mar our spiritual lives and lessen our power

with God and man. Then, by reading God's book and thinking God's thoughts, by prayer and meditation, and by activity in his service, we need to be drawn more closely to him.

But not only the relationship Godward needs renewing and strengthening; we must also come into more intimate contact with men, if we are to have power over them. We hear much about the separation of the church from the masses. If they are separated from each other, they never became separated *en masse*. They become separated as individuals. They must be brought together as individuals. Pharisaism by its separation could never save the world, but Christianity by personal contact of Christlike individuals with individuals, can and must save the race. Men are not saved at a distance, but by personal contact with saved men, who reveal to them a living, present and powerful Savior. If we would have power, then, we must come into most intimate relationship with Christ, the source of power, and with those whom we would save.

Some years ago I looked upon an interesting picture. In the foreground was the ocean, stirred by a storm, its billows tossing mountain high; while in the background was a rocky shore, and upon its crags a large cross, to which was clinging the form of a woman, just rescued from a watery grave. Ah! it was a beautiful sight; for, with both arms firmly clasped about the

cross, she looked heavenward with beaming face and read on the sky the song of her soul, "Simply to thy cross I cling." This, I thought, was a Christian masterpiece; until some time afterwards I saw another picture which excelled the first as sunlight exceeds the light of the stars. In the foreground there was the same storm-swept ocean, in the background the craggy shore, the cross and the inspiring motto; while a woman just rescued from the deep, clung with one arm only to the cross, and, with face heavenward and seaward, stretched out the other arm to those who were perishing in the same sea from which she had scarcely been saved. Ah! methinks the latter is Christianity! Not both arms about a cross, and ecstasy over personal salvation, forgetful of the peril of others; but with a firm grasp upon the cross with one arm, with face Christward and manward, the other stretched out to save our fellows. With one hand in the hand of the sinless, and the other hand in the hand of the sinner, let us in Christ's stead beseech men to be reconciled to God. So shall the Person of Christ be the motive power in our lives, and become the loving Savior of others.

Gradual Growth

Mark 4: 28.—"First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

OUR Lord spoke three parables about the Kingdom of God with reference to the subject of growth.*

(a) At one time he said, "The Kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth; but when it is sown, it groweth up and becometh greater than all herbs and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it." By this parable Christ represented the Kingdom of God as an external society, beginning small and increasing in size, and growth in the Kingdom as something external and visible, resulting in increased bulk.

(b) Again, our Savior likened the Kingdom of God to "leaven, which a woman took, and hid in

* Again I desire to express my great debt to the writings of Prof. A. B. Bruce.

three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." In this parable the Kingdom of God is represented as an internal force; and growth in it as something internal, invisible, resulting in a transformed mass.

(c) Again, our Savior said, "So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." In this parable emphasis is laid upon the nature of growth, as something mysterious, something spontaneous, and something gradually progressive.

It is necessary in the interpretation of all illustrations, comparisons and parables, carefully to recognize the difference between that which is essential and that which is incidental, between figure and shading, foreground and background. For instance, when our Lord's second coming is likened unto the coming of a thief in the night, it is evident that the thing taught is not that he shall necessarily come at night time, nor that he shall use the devices of a thief, but that he shall come suddenly and unexpectedly. Now, in the parable above mentioned, of "the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear,' it is evident that

"the casting of the seed into the ground," and "the putting in of the sickle when harvest time has come," are but shading to round out and complete the picture. Three things seem to stand in the foreground and to be emphasized: The mysteriousness of growth, "it springeth and groweth up and he knoweth not how"; the spontaneity of growth, "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself"; and the gradual progressiveness of growth, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." As to which of these three ideas was predominating in the mind of the Savior at the time of utterance, if indeed any one was foremost in his mind, may be a matter for difference of opinion or interpretation; but to my own mind the thought of the gradual progressiveness of growth is the more prominent, and the phrases, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," are the more emphatic. Allow me, then, to take the clauses, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," as a text, and to call your attention to the law of gradual and progressive growth.

1. We note first that this law is easily recognized as a law always operative in the natural, physical world. In the springtime, as processes move on before our very eyes, we see the erstwhile leafless and apparently lifeless trees, under the influence of warmth, sunshine and rain, begin to bud and to blush with the might of life.

As night and day, sunshine and shade follow, the buds develop and burst into fragrant bloom, green fruit and shade-giving leaf. Summer follows spring, and the gradually progressive process goes on, until the ripening days of autumn bring processes to fruition and the development is complete. Among animals, also, there is the spring of childhood, the summer of youth and middle age, and the autumn of maturity. In the vegetable and animal worlds alike, i. e., wherever there is life and growth, the law of the gradualness and progressiveness of growth is seen.

But Christian apologists, while easily admitting the existence of such laws in the natural world, have been slow to admit their existence in the world of spiritual things. There has been manifested a certain fearfulness, lest if there should be admitted the existence in spiritual things of laws, of such things as cause and effect, the spiritual might be debased to the level of the natural. There has been a fear, lest if natural laws were admitted to have counterparts, or analogous laws, in the spiritual realm, the spiritual might become natural, law and order might be enthroned as God, and the Creator ruled entirely out of the Universe. And yet, what seems more reasonable than that he, who established the laws of nature, should have established similar laws in the world of spirit. Must the supernatural be necessarily

contrary to nature, and miracle be equivalent to magic? However, such reasonings are rapidly passing away, and a wider scholarship and a more tolerant age have given us a new point of view. To-day we everywhere recognize in spiritual things the existence of laws, laws which in many cases seem to be analogous to, or identical with, the laws of the natural world. Let us consider the oneness of this law of gradualness and progressiveness of growth in Creation, Revelation and Sanctification.

2. Creation was gradual and progressive. I am not advocating that theory of so-called evolution which would make the ape the remote ancestor of man. For over against a century of theorizing and experimentation to support such a theory of evolution, must be written the verdict, "Not proven." No well differentiated species has ever been produced. Interesting varieties have been developed; but a fatal law of atavism has always brought about a reversion to the original type. Connecting links have either been lost, or never existed. In the mineral world, however, we have preserved to us the record in geological strata of the gradual preparation of the earth for man. But whatever may be one's theory of evolution, whether it were a true evolution or by distinct creative acts; creation was, at any rate, probably a gradual and progressive process. This is not only not contrary to, but in exact accord

with, the general teaching of the program of creation, presented to us in the first chapter of Genesis. First God existed. Then the heavens and the earth were created, without form and void, enveloped in darkness, but under the brooding spirit of the Almighty. Then light, a first necessity of life, was created. Then heaven, earth, dry land, sea, night and day were separated. Then vegetable life appeared. Then the lower animal life and fishes. Then quadrupeds and the higher vertebrates, and finally man. Thus the process was a gradually progressive one, leading from lower to higher, culminating in man, the highest of all. The law of creation was "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

3. Again, Revelation was gradual and progressive. God did not reveal the whole of his will to any one of the prophets or apostles, nor at any one time. His revelation proceeded upon true principles of education, beginning with the simple and proceeding to the profound; from concrete to abstract; from pictured truth to spiritual reality. That this was the method of revelation may be illustrated in many ways. Take, for example, the emphasis placed at first upon outward forms and ceremonies. Note how much was made at first of ritual; how only gradually the prophets rose to higher spiritual perceptions, and the truth was emphasized, "To

obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Gradually the internal rose above the external, the spiritual above the material. Christ referred to this gradually progressive process in revelation when he said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit; and they that worship must worship in spirit and in truth." Again, note how at first in Scripture the rewards for piety are largely material things; while, in the full light of completed revelation, the highest rewards of piety and the fruits of the spirit are spiritual blessings. Again, note the gradualness and progressiveness in the revelation of certain great ideas, such as, for example, the immortality of the soul, and the life beyond the grave. Indeed, there seems to be very little concerning these great subjects in the Old Testament. A glimpse or two in Job, or a hope expressed in a Psalm, is about all. It is only in New Testament times that Christ brought "life and immortality to light, through the Gospel." In nothing is the gradualness and progressiveness of revelation more clearly seen than in the development of Messianic Prophecy, the gradual unfolding of the plan of salvation through a

coming Savior. The theme of Redemption begins in Genesis in very indistinct and uncertain tones; and, like the approach of music from afar, only a note here and there in the divine melody can be distinguished. On and on roll the centuries; prophet after prophet arises, each adding some new variation, or modulation, to the original theme. Sometimes, from some mountain peak of prophetic activity, like that of Isaiah, the strains roll majestic, and every note in the divine melody rings out with the clearness of a bell. Sometimes, in some valley of national decay, or prophetic silence, the strains seem to die away, and the music seems muffled. On and on roll the ages, until at last the bugle call announces the birth of John the Baptist, the herald of coming deliverance; and then, on the well known December night, in the fullness of God's time, over the hills of Bethlehem rings out the oratorio of the Messiah, the full Hallelujah Chorus of Redemption, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." Thus from the beginning of the Old Testament Revelation to the coming of Christ, the method of revelation was that of gradual and progressive growth. In the New Testament, likewise, we find the gradually progressive process continued: Christ himself revealing God's will to man "as they were able to bear it"; and the apostles, after the death and resurrection of Christ, explaining, as it was

revealed to them, the full meaning of the salvation which the Son had accomplished.

Since Apostolic days, there has been no development in the line of addition of new truths, God's written revelation being complete, a sufficient declaration of his will, and an infallible guide in all matters of faith and practice. In it, and in the divine human character revealed in it, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In the perception and application of truth, however, the gradually progressive process continues. Every day reveals to us new applications of truth, and new depths and heights and lengths and breadths of his wonderful love and gracious purposes towards mankind. Thus we see that the law of revelation was the law of gradual and progressive growth. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

4. Again, Sanctification is gradual and progressive. In the Kingdom of God, as an external society and as represented by the Church of Christ upon earth, the growth has been a very gradual one; and, as we firmly believe, in general a progressive growth. When one takes a broad and unprejudiced view of the history of the church, of the civilization of which Christianity has been the chief cause; when one sees how one age has led up to and prepared the way for a subsequent and better age; in spite of the dark times, and many

black pages of history, it is easy to sing with the poet:

> "Yet I doubt not through the ages
> One increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widened
> With the process of the suns."

The gradual growth of the power of religious ideas, the increasing hold of the Christ upon men, the slow but sure progress in the regeneration of society, are fascinating themes, and illustrate clearly the law of gradual and progressive growth, but I cannot speak of them now. It is a more personal matter that I wish to consider, and to apply the text to the process of the sanctification of the individual. Nor is it my purpose to discuss the question of the possibility of immediate sanctification, nor the question of the degree of sanctification attainable in this life. Suffice it to say, that, if immediate sanctification in this life has ever taken place, it is not the usual thing, nor the ordinary process of sanctification. I care not to treat of exceptions, but of the general rule. As to the degree of sanctification attainable in this life, it is not a question of degree, but a question of method, with which I am now concerned.

All real growth, all permanent growth is slow growth. The clinging vine may, in a single summer, climb to a great height, but it takes a century to grow an oak. Jonah's gourd came up in a night, but it likewise perished in a night.

The cathedrals of Europe, centuries old, were centuries in building. Again, the higher forms of life are more slow of development. A horse often is at its best in a few years, but a man only attains maturity after several decades. The monad passes through birth, youth, maturity, old age and death, within the short period of twenty-four hours; but it is only a monad. If, then, real growth, permanent growth, is slow, and still more so in proportion as the product is high, must not the development of character, the attainment of sanctification, the winning of that which is highest and best, and toward the attainment of which all noblest endeavors should always be engaged, must not that growth be indeed a slow and a gradual one? Our text suggests three stages of growth in sanctification, a blade stage, a green ear stage, and a full corn stage. (And here Professor Bruce, in his treatment of Christ's parables, is very helpful.) At once several questions arise. Do these three stages always appear in the process of sanctification? Do they always occur in the same order, and are they always distinguishable one from another? As to the last question, it must be noted, referring again to the grain which is the basis of comparison, that growth in the natural world is such a gradually progressive process, that it is not possible to be so minute as to affirm that for just so many days, hours and minutes, grain is in

the blade stage; and then, for just so many days, hours and minutes, it is in the green ear stage; and then, for just so many days, hours and minutes, it is in the full corn stage. These stages merge one into another. But, looked at from a more general standpoint, we see that there is a blade period, there is a green ear period, and there is a full corn period. So with these stages in the development of sanctification, one stage merges into another, but in general the three stages occur, and occur in the order named. Let us note some of the characteristics of these stages. Mark the blade period; or, referring to fruit as well as to grain, we may call it the blossom period, the spring-tide, the time of initial growth. It is a time of enthusiasm, of childhood's happy joy, of the wild thrill of first love. And, referring to the beginning period of the Christian's life, we recall the joyousness of the young convert, and the ardent enthusiasm; the zeal which would quickly convert a world, and which stands amazed at the apparent coldness of older Christians; the light step and the bounding joy of a new life. But note also, concerning the very beginning of this initial period, how nature illustrates diverse operations of grace. Some kinds of grain, when planted, make the first show of life by sending up through the clods a little spike of green. There is no demonstration; without observation, almost, the little blade makes its way

up to the light and air, and the process of initial growth is a very quiet and unobserved one. But fruit trees, which seemed just a while ago so dead and cold, in a very few days of sunshine swell quickly and, apparently almost in an instant, burst into a halo of bloom, and into a bower of fragrance. So the beginning of the new life is manifested differently in different persons. Some, especially children, accustomed from earliest days to the teachings of the Bible and to thoughts of Christ, are born so quietly into the spiritual world as to realize scarcely any change in condition. Though they have been truly born again, the manifestation of the new life has been so gradual, that, in after days, though they are sure of their having been born again, they are never able to determine the exact time when the new birth took place. Then there are others, and particularly is this true of older people, who, dead in indifference and hardened by years of sin and selfish indulgence, are suddenly arrested in their course of godlessness, catch a saving sight of Jesus, and immediately all is changed. They were lost, but are found. They were dead in sin, but now have begun to live unto Christ. The whole world seems new; the sun shines brighter; the sky is bluer; the grass is greener. Things are the same as of old, but the man has changed. The tree has burst into bloom. But it must always be kept in mind that

this blade stage, this blossom period, is but the beginning of the Christian life. Many mistake the blossom for the fruit, springtime for harvest, holy feeling for holy living, gushing enthusiasm for staunch character.

Sooner or later, blade and blossom are followed by green ear and unripe fruit. This is a second stage in the process of sanctification. It is a time of transition. "A time of waiting, of unfulfilled desires, of unrealized ideals, of green ears and unripe fruit, of experiences more profitable than pleasant." The green fruit is a stage in advance of the blossom, but it is not so beautiful or fragrant. The second stage is "a time of temptation and struggle, of doubts and fears, of sadness and gloom." A time when the foundations of faith are re-examined, when deeper views of the meaning of consecration bring doubts as to one's own sincerity, and a higher perception of the demands of holiness brings despair as to one's own attainment. It is a trying time, indeed, a time when many sincere souls sometimes doubt even their own conversion. And yet it is but a preparatory stage to something richer and riper. Let not those who are passing through such experiences be unduly cast down, or too severely blame themselves. It is no sin to be in the "green corn and unripe fruit" stage, though it is sin permanently to remain so, and never to pass beyond from greenness to ripeness. This transi-

tion period usually comes to all those who bring forth the best fruit; for always has it been true that "they who reap in greatest joy sow most in tears."

But, as blossom was followed by unripe fruit, and blade by green ear; so surely, if we are faithful and patient, unripe fruit will be followed by ripeness, and green ear by the full corn in the ear. This third stage of sanctification is referred to by Bunyan, when, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," Christian, having passed through the Valley of Humiliation and the Shadow of Death, having escaped the clutches of Giant Despair, has at last reached Beulah Land, from which one cannot so much as see Doubting Castle, and where one lives within constant vision of the Eternal City. Here the fruit of the spirit has become an abiding possession. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering," have become traits of character, and "heavenly impulse has become a heavenly habit." Those who attain to this stage of Christian maturity are always conscious of the high demands of holiness, of their constant dependence upon Christ, of the heinousness of sin, and are clearly cognizant of their own shortcomings.

Thus the course of personal sanctification is seen to be a gradual and progressive one. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

As the process of sanctification is slow and

gradual, as there are stages which must necessarily be passed through, we need to exercise continually the Christlike virtue of patience. First, patience with others. How crude and immature the ideas of some seem to be! How full of glaring faults their lives are! Why cannot they see that such actions are so un-Christlike! But we must exercise patience! How patient the Master was with those rude fishermen, his disciples, whose ideas seemed so worldly, whose ambitions were so sordid, whose passions were so uncontrolled, who were so slow to believe and to understand the parables and spiritual truths which he wished to teach them! And yet the Master never lost his patience. And then we must be patient with ourselves. We become impatient of slow processes. We crave short-cuts to holiness and fruitfulness. But we shall attain to highest maturity only as we patiently abide God's time and faithfully perform the duties of each day. Those who were profitable hearers received the word into good and honest hearts, and "with patience brought forth fruit unto perfection." "Let us also, then, laying aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Thus may we all, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, be changed into the same image from glory to

glory," and then, when the gradually progressive process of sanctification is complete, and we pass into his presence, "we shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness."

Working for Jesus

Matt. 25 : 15.—"And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey."

OUR Savior spoke three parables upon the great theme of "Work and Wages in the Kingdom of God": the parable of the husbandman, hiring laborers to work in his vineyard; the parable of the ten pounds, given to the ten servants; and the parable of the talents. The parable of the talents is doubtless, to many of us, the most familiar of the three. Its lessons have often been considered, and yet it may be of great profit to us to recall at this time some of its most evident teachings.

The parable story is briefly told. A man of some wealth is about to go to a distant country. He leaves his money and property in the hands of his servants *for use.* The ability of each of his servants is well known to him. Being a wise manager, he does not give similar amounts to all, but gives to each according to each one's ability;

not too much to any, not too little to any; to none enough to burden or overcome, to none so little as to encourage to idleness; but "unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey." As soon as the master was gone, the first servant, by prudent business methods, by looking for and seizing every possible opportunity, by constant diligence and skill, succeeded in doubling his capital. The second servant, who had received two talents, manifested a similar diligence and skill, and achieved a similar result, the doubling of his capital. The third servant was a timid and shrinking man, of less ability than either of the others, but *able to do something;* with a poor opinion of his master and of himself, lazy as well as little and lean. This one went away and dug a hole in the ground and "hid his lord's money." "After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." After a long time! After sufficient time has passed for testing the diligence and efficiency of each servant; after sufficient time for each one to have had splendid opportunities for accomplishing something for the master, the lord of those servants returns, and each one is called to give an account of his stewardship. The man who had received the five talents comes forward, with beaming face and firm step, proud of his honest achievement, and yet humble with the

humility so becoming a faithful servant; and says, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." The master rejoices in such a servant, and his bounding heart responds to such service, "Well done" (had he not done well?) "thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." After this servant comes another, the one who had received two talents. He, also, has a happy face, and a throbbing heart, as the result of faithful living, already possessing a heaven of happiness as the result of conscious attainment and humble gratitude for the privilege of service. "He also that had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.'" Again appears the master's responsive smile, and again are heard the words of approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Thus far, the day of reckoning has been a day of honest joy, both to master and servants; a day when the seal of divine approval has but brought added delight to those who have already known the privilege and pleasure of faithful living. But *now* comes one whose unfaithfulness has brought shadow and shame upon

himself, and who carries gloom wherever he goes. "Then he that had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not scattered: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.' His lord answered and said unto him, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not scattered: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with interest. Thou oughtest to have been afraid to have appeared before me empty handed.'" If too timid to take responsibility and too lazy to work, you could at least have put my money to the exchangers for interest. There is *no excuse for your having done absolutely nothing.* "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Cast him out! Let the gloom which he has made for himself be perpetual. Cast him out! There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, weeping over lost opportunities, and gnashing of teeth in envy of those who, by faithfulness, won what he might have had. This is the parable story briefly told and paraphrased; let us now note some of the more apparent teachings:

1. *The master expects service from every one of*

his servants. (a) The very idea of a kingdom suggests a king and subjects, implying loyalty and allegiance. (b) A talent was given to every one; every one was called to an account, because the master expected something from every one of his servants. (c) Paul loved to call himself the "bond servant" of Jesus Christ, declaring that he was not his own, but had been bought with a price. We have all of us as Christians been set free from the slavery of sin, that we may be servants of righteousness and of him who redeemed us, not "with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (d) One purpose of the Lord's delayed coming is that every one may have a splendid opportunity for service; no one will be able to say at that time, "O Lord, you came back too soon. I didn't get a chance or time to render any service." (e) The very purpose of our endowments and relationships is that we may use all of these things for God. We are stewards in respect to all things that we possess, and it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. (f) It is God's design to use men and women in the accomplishment of his purposes. No angel will be sent down to do in your community what God expects you and calls you to do. (g) The Master expects service not simply from ministers and trained workers, but from every one of his serv-

ants. The parable as recorded in Mark says: "To every man his work." If you are a son, then the message of the Master to you is, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." "And let him that heareth say 'Come'." (h) There is no place for idlers in the Kingdom of God. The Master seems continually to be going about and saying, "Why stand ye here the whole day idle? There's work to be done. There's a harvest to be gathered. Loafers are not wanted!" Drones were, in ancient times, "drummed out of camp." (i) If Christ is in you, he will manifest himself, and will cry out as of old, "I must be about my Father's business." If you are doing nothing for Christ you may well doubt whether the Christ is in you. If there is not in you some divine compulsion, driving you on in the Master's service, you may be sure that there is not much of the Christ in you. You may well doubt whether you are a Christian. And, what is more, if you are doing nothing *for* him, you *will* soon doubt whether you are in him: for idleness is the sure road to doubt and despair. (j) There is no excuse for doing absolutely nothing. The servant of least ability, with only one talent, had at least the exchangers. Whatever these exchangers may represent in the opportunities of to-day, the teaching is very clear that even he had no excuse for having done absolutely nothing. No one of God's children is doomed to idleness in his vine-

yard. (k) The servant who went away and dug a hole in the ground and "hid his lord's money," withdrew so much money from active circulation, and embarrassed to that extent the affairs of Christ's kingdom. During a recent campaign in our political world, people were denouncing most severely all measures which would tend to a contraction of the currency, and were heaping blessings upon the heads of any whose policy would honestly and surely increase the volume of the circulating medium. All people, irrespective of party affiliations, were agreed that the contraction of the currency and hard times had a close connection with one another, whatever may have been the cause of the contraction. Money had been very seriously withdrawn from the avenues of trade. Hard times had come with the stringency in the money-market. Something must be done to bring back into circulation a larger amount of the medium of exchange. When money should begin again to circulate freely, good times would return. The Kingdom of God is suffering in many places from a contraction of the circulating medium. I speak not particularly with reference to money in the Kingdom. I refer to your hands, your feet, your voices, yourselves. They are the circulating medium by which our King does business. There is "hard times" in the Kingdom to-day, because you have withdrawn these things from the King's service. You, your

voices, your feet, your hands, your influence, your time, these are God's medium of exchange, by which he designs to carry on his business. Do you wish to know how to bring about a revival in the religious life of your community? There is but one sure way. Let there be a return of confidence, on the part of Christians, in God's Book, in God's power and willingness to save through Christ, in God's promises, in his purpose to use you, each one of you, in some part of this work, in the superlative worth of the soul of every man, and in his capacity for redemption. Let there be on your part a return of confidence in these things, and then invest—invest your every power! Consecrate every relationship to God. Put into circulation in God's Kingdom your all; and there'll be a mighty revival, not only in your own personal life, but also in your community.

2. The Master *expects a peculiar service from every one* of his servants. "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability"; or, as Mark says, "To each man his work." (a) All of the Master's servants are expected to serve him, but they are not all expected to serve him in a similar capacity, or in the same way. To each person special duties and special privileges come. No two persons are exactly alike in ability or circumstances. We are not blocks of uniform size, not things, but persons. God has so honored the

individual as to have made each one of us differ in some respect from every other one. God never made two *persons* exactly alike. Individuality is stamped upon every member of the human race. We are born as individuals. We die as individuals. We are saved as individuals. Christ loves us as individuals. We shall be judged as individuals. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Thus we have peculiar privileges and peculiar perils, and from each one the Master expects peculiar service. (b) In the recognition of this fact lies the true division of labor in both the religious and economic worlds. One of the most common causes of unrest and disaster in the economic world, is the failure to realize that the true division of labor is grounded in capacity and circumstance. There are so many "misfits" in life; men in the law who ought to be in the ministry; men in the ministry who ought to be in the law; men in the country who ought to be in the town, and in the town who ought to be in the country; men in business who ought to be in the professions, and men in the professions who ought to be in commercial life, etc., etc. Solomon's proverb, so often mistranslated and misapplied, "Train up a child according to his way" (to his bent), "and when he is old he will not

depart from it," furnishes a true principle of education; and, in the future, we may hope that our youth shall be clearly taught the real basis of all true division of labor, as grounded in capacity and circumstance. Then, in the future, so many "misfits" will not occur. When the millennium shall have come in the economic world, every man and woman will be doing that which he is best fitted to do. So, in the religious world, the true division of labor lies in capacity and circumstance. Not all are called to preach from the pulpit; not all are to call upon the sick; not all are to teach in the Sunday-school. The church, according to Paul's inimitable figure, is one body, many members. "For the body is not one member, but many. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him, and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again, the head to the feet, I have no need of thee. Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members each in his part." Each one of us has a peculiar work to do, and the work of each is necessary to the completeness of the whole. (c) Through peculiar service from each servant, Christ's far-reaching purposes will best be fulfilled. The Master desires that his Kingdom shall reach per-

sons of every profession and calling, of every class and circumstance: consequently he wishes to have workers in every honorable walk of life. You can work for Christ to better advantage in the sphere of your secular calling than anywhere else, and to better advantage than any one else. The Christian lawyer can have more influence in bringing the unconverted lawyer to Christ than can anybody else. The consecrated physician can have more influence over his non-Christian, professional associates than can any one else. The whole-hearted, devoted Christian clerk can have more influence for Christ over his fellow-clerks than can any one else. So in case of wife or husband, brother or friend. You, if your life is as it ought to be, will have most influence over those who know you best. Knowledge begets confidence. (d) Whatever your future sphere of labor may be, your present one ought to be perfectly plain. *Do the next thing.* Tell the next man what you know about Jesus. O Gadarene! "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee." Begin at home, and in your own community, and among your own friends, to work for Jesus; and when, by patient labor, you have exhausted the possibilities of that sphere, and by faithfulness have manifested your fitness for another, God will surely open up to you new fields of labor. Begin

just where you are. Andrew! bring Peter. Philip! bring Nathaniel. Use the opportunities which are now in sight, and your vision will become keener, and you'll soon see more. To the one who uses what he has, will more be given. (e) In faithfully recognizing that Christ's demands are for peculiar service from each one of us lies the secret of much true contentment and joy in life. Let me illustrate this point by referring to an incident which happened some years ago. It was in the summer of 1890, at New Haven, Conn. Rev. R. T. Vann was supplying, during the pastor's absence, the pulpit of the Calvary Baptist Church. Mr. Vann, when twelve years of age, in attempting to help his father in North Carolina, had fallen into a sorghum machine, and had lost both of his arms, one at the shoulder and the other at the elbow. At the time of my meeting him in New Haven, I was well and strong, in the flush of health, and had hardly known what it was to be sick a day in my life. His peace and happiness in his armless state were a continual surprise to me, and I asked him one day, "Don't you often wish, Mr. Vann, that you, like the rest of us, had two arms?" I shall never forget his reply. It impressed me at the time as being absolutely sincere, and in recent years I have learned for myself the secret of his peace. "No, I don't waste time in wishing that any more. I have learned to get along without arms. It

would be a great convenience to have one hand with which to write, specially to my dear wife (I can only write a little with the hook on the stub of arm that is left); often there are so many things I should like to tell her, but she has learned to read between the lines. And then, too, when I go to call on my people, it would be a great convenience if I could shake them by the hand; it isn't much pleasure for them to shake an empty coat sleeve. No, I've learned to get along without arms, and to be very happy and contented. Not to have any arms hinders me, too, in my preaching, but then, I've learned some things. You know, Mr. S., God never intended me to be a Spurgeon or a Beecher. He simply wishes *me* to make the most out of the stuff that he has given to *me*. I have long ago learned to thank God that I was nobody but R. T. Vann; if you don't understand what I mean now, before you are as old as I am you will, I trust, have learned its meaning" (his words now seem like prophecy), "and when I get up to the bar of God, I trust that then I can honestly say, 'Lord, here's old, armless R. T. Vann. I have honestly tried, Lord, to make the most out of what you gave me; it's been a pleasure to serve you.' If, at that day, I can say that, will not the Master be pleased?" This was the substance of his answer to my question, and then and there I began to see that, in the clear recognition of the fact that the

Master expects peculiar service from each one of his servants, lies the secret of much real happiness and joy in life.

3. This parable of the talents brings out very clearly also another lesson. Not only does the Master expect service from every one of his servants, and peculiar service from each one of his servants, but also, in this service, *much will depend upon the spirit of the servant, and the spirit of the servant will depend much upon his conception of his master.* One of the most blessed and far-reaching thoughts which ever enter the mind of man is a true thought of God. Man's work and man's character are largely determined by his thought of God. As he gets a true vision of God, man's character is ennobled and his work proves inspiring. As he gets a false view of God, man's character is marred, and the service of God becomes drudgery. One of these servants had a very poor opinion of his master, which opinion made him a very poor servant, and robbed his master of his service. The servant who said, "I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not scattered," was the servant who went away and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. So some people think of God as a hard taskmaster, as a cruel, arbitrary ruler, as a stern judge, before whom we must appear, one who has no personal interest in us except such as

a slave-driver, to get out of us as much as possible. One with such an idea of God, if he ever works for him at all, works as the slave works, from fear, doing only what may be compulsory, and dodging as much work as possible. Such a service is dull, dreary, dry drudgery, with little spirit and no real joy. The biblical conception of God, however, is far different from this. The great God at the center of the universe is not a monster, not a cruel, arbitrary taskmaster, but a gracious Father. He loves every member of the human race. He is personally interested in every one of his creatures. He loves us with an outreaching, overflowing love. He has provided salvation for all in the sacrifice of his Son. "As many as received him, to them gave he the power (authority, right) to become the sons of God." He has redeemed us with his own precious blood, bought us out of the slavery of sin and called us into his own service. He places upon us responsibilities, and gives unto us the privileges of service, for the purpose of developing us. He is not a cruel taskmaster, trying to get out of us as much as possible. He is a loving Father, anxious to make of us as much as possible. It is a great privilege to work for him. Faithful service will bring manifold and abundant reward, both here and hereafter. This was Paul's idea of God, so strikingly set forth in his letter to the Philippians. The thought is this: God is my

Friend, my Father. Christ has redeemed me with his precious blood, has bought me with a great price for his very own, has saved me for a great purpose, is ambitious for me, more so than I am even for myself, has in his heart a large ideal for me. (There is a life-plan in the heart of the Father for each one of his children.) Oh! Father, help me so to live and learn, so to aspire and to act, as that I may not mar or cramp, warp or dwarf the life-plan, the manhood, the character to which thou wouldst have me attain. Help me to realize, to make my own, to seize, "to apprehend that for which also I have been apprehended of Christ Jesus." Father, help me this one thing to do, "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before," to press toward "the mark for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus." In joy or sorrow, in pain or pleasure, in prosperity or adversity, "for me to live is Christ, to die is gain." And so "I am in a strait betwixt two things, having a desire to depart and be with Christ (which is far better), nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." I stand between two mountain peaks of blessing. Two great boons loom up before me: to live for Christ, to reproduce the Christlike character, to win fruit for eternity; or to die and be forever with Christ. Both are rare privileges indeed, either is a pleasure worth pursuing. How shall I choose? This

is the spirit of Paul, the willing servant of Jesus Christ. The slave serves from fear; the hireling serves for money; the son serves from love. "If ye know these things, blessed" (happy) "are ye if ye do them."

The Bible, the Book of God

Isaiah 40:8.—"*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand forever.*"
Matt. 24:35.—"*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*"

IN this age of books, the truth of Sir Walter Scott's statement, "There is but one book," constantly becomes more apparent. Every year witnesses an increasing amount of devout, searching and systematic study of the Bible. This study assumes various forms—the study of the text, the study of the literary form, the historical study of the source and character of the material, the exegetical study of the meaning, and the devotional study for the upbuilding of the spiritual life. This study of the Bible, specially the historical study, has given rise to many questions which have been popularized through magazines, lecture bureaus, and some pulpits, and which have unnecessarily disturbed the minds and hearts of not a few of God's people. For instance, "What is the date and composition of

the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible? Did Moses write them, or are they of composite authorship? Or, again, did David write all of the Psalms ascribed to him in the Psalter, or were many of them written by others, and ascribed by tradition to David? Did Isaiah write all of the book which is called by his name, or did one man write the first thirty-nine chapters, and another, living one hundred and fifty years after, write the last twenty-seven chapters? Is the book of Zechariah a unit, or were there two Zechariahs? How many letters were written by the Apostle Paul? Who was the author of Hebrews?" These are a few of the questions that are being discussed in many places, and are disturbing the faith of some. And yet, all of these questions are matters of relatively minor importance; many of them are extremely technical, and are capable of answer only by specialists. All have to do with the nature and method of revelation, rather than with the fact of revelation. I am not so much concerned as to how or through whom God gave the Bible, as I am with the fact that God gave it. It will not materially affect my faith if all of these questions of the nature and method of revelation are answered differently in the future from what they have been in the past. I only need to know that "the Bible is the book which brings to the church and to the world the true word of God concerning redemption from sin,"

that it is the word of God—God's book; that he has sent it forth, is behind it, has taken care of it in the past, and will throughout all time. Then I may be sure, as Professor Ladd has said in the conclusion of his discussion, "What is the Bible?" that "no discovery of modern biblical criticism, science or archeology can detract from or diminish the power of the Bible to do what God intended it should do." However, to strengthen the faith of the strong, to clarify the minds of the troubled, and to help the honest inquirer after truth, I propose to give this morning a few of the reasons why I believe the Bible to be the book of God.

1. *Unity with Diversity.*—The first reason which I mention is drawn from the fact of the wonderful unity with diversity which the Bible presents. Here we have a book, or rather, a collection of sixty-six books, written by as many as forty different authors, during a period of from 1,500 to 2,000 years. If the views of certain higher critics are to be accepted, that some of these single books were written by several authors rather than one, the force of the present argument is only made the stronger. Here, then, we have a book, or rather, a collection of sixty-six books, written by many authors during a long period of time. These writers lived and wrote in different countries, far apart from each other in space and time. Some lived and wrote under the shadow of the Pyramids in Egypt; some in the deserts of

Arabia; some among the hills of Palestine; some amid the magnificence of a Nebuchadnezzar; some in the provinces of the Persians; some in the cities of Asia Minor, and Greece; some in imperial Rome. They wrote in different ages of the world. Some when the Pharaohs ruled a mightly empire upon the Nile; some when Solomon built the magnificent temple at Jerusalem; some when the proud Assyrian roamed over the plains of Mesopotamia; some when the Cæsars ruled the world. They wrote in different languages; some in the language of faith, the stately Hebrew; others in degenerate Aramaic, and others in the flowing, expressive tongue of the Greeks. They wrote in different forms of literature—we have prose and poetry, history, biography, legislation, and philosophy, orations, hymns, letters, didactic, lyric, narrative, illustrative, dramatic, and allegorical forms of literature. These writers came from different ranks in life, and represented every class in society—kings and fishermen, shepherds and statesmen, royal Isaiah, and herdsman Amos, rich and poor, uneducated and learned, prophet, priest and king, warrior, farmer, and tent-maker, royal cup bearer and regal monarch, the rough ascetic of the desert, and the polished companion at the king's court; men widely different in education and natural ability, under widely different political, social, and religious conditions, writing from their own

national or temporal point of view, in their own way, with characteristic styles, peculiar phrases and constructions, and marked individuality. They treated of many different themes, of angels and demons, of earth, heaven and hell, of justice and mercy, of love and wrath, of law human and divine, of duty and destiny, of present, past, and future, of soul and body, of the individual, the family, the state; treating of or touching upon well-nigh every theme of human thought. Such is the marvelous diversity in place, time, language, literature, men, style, and themes in the Bible; and yet, amid all this diversity, there is such a unity in aim, such a oneness in all the parts, such a consistency in teaching concerning God and man, sin and salvation, and the other mighty themes which are treated, that the sixty-six books have been bound together under a common cover, and called, pre-eminently, "The Book." There is something in these books so unique as to bind them one to another, and forever to separate them from other writings. Men have tried again and again to produce other sacred writings, but the natural and the artificial flowers are separated by an immeasurable distance. There is a life, a power, a fragrance, in these writings not found elsewhere. But these books are characterized not only by a strange unity—one doctrine of God, of sin, of salvation, of heaven, of hell, of duty, which seems very remarkable—but also, from the first to

the last, there is "a gradual progressiveness in the unfolding of truth; there is a steady march onward from outward and material to inward and spiritual conceptions of religion, a constantly rising and hopeful outstretching toward a better and higher future," a converging of all things toward one event, and an unfolding from that event.

Again, the uniform silence of these books upon topics which merely gratify curiosity, and the bending of all energy in discussing God's claim upon men, is a striking feature of unity. Some one has truly said, "Throughout the Bible the crimson cord of sacrifice is clearly manifest, on which the books are strung together as beads on a thread." No other collection could be made of books written at such widely separated times and places, by such different men, under such a variety of circumstances, even upon a single theme, that would manifest any such unity of thought and purpose. Only one rational explanation can be given to account for this unity amid such diversity. The Book must have been the product of one mind that planned and directed the whole of it from beginning to end, and that one mind could have been none other than God. I am told that, when the great cantilever bridge over the Niagara rapids was constructed, the various parts were made in different portions of the land, and all finished and shipped to Niagara ready for use.

They were then fastened together, and every brace and bolt and beam was an exact fit. Only one rational explanation can be given—one master mind had furnished the plans and specifications, and the several parts had been made according to the patterns given. And so this Book, written by men in different lands and times, in different languages and forms, is a unit from beginning to end, formed according to the directions of the master mind of its divine architect—God.

2. *Universal Adaptation to Human Needs.*—A second reason why I believe the Bible is the book of God is because of its universal adaptation to human needs. It is the only universal book. Other books are limited more or less to small circles of readers. Some are interesting to boys and men, others to girls and women; some are profitable to youth, others to middle life and old age; some we pick up in our joy, others we turn to in times of sadness; some are the delight of the rich and prosperous, others are the solace of the poor and the afflicted; some are favorites in the Orient, others are popular only among Anglo-Saxons. But in the Bible we find the one book of universal adaptation, suited to the needs of man and woman, old and young, rich and poor, educated and uneducated; a book not limited by clime or condition, age or nationality, into which men and women, boys and girls, of

every people, of every tongue, may look as into a mirror, and see reflected there their own needs and defects, and in which may be found a balm for every wound. This book touches life at so many points, is so adapted to every human need, that strangers, reading it for the first time, are so impressed with its truthfulness as to feel that it must have been written specially for them.* When Dr. Chalmers had read to the natives of an East Indian city the first chapter of Romans, an intelligent Brahmin said to him: "Sir, that chapter must have been written for us Hindoos. It fits us exactly." In Lyons, France, an ignorant listener said to Dr. McCall, as he read the Bible to him, "Never in my life have I heard the truth so explained; my conscience answers to it." A prisoner in a Massachusetts prison, when asked why he believed the Bible to be the word of God, said, "It strikes a fellow so." This universality of the Bible makes it the most easy of all books to translate into other tongues. Of Bible translation, some one has truly said: "From Greenland to Patagonia, in the western hemisphere, and from Iceland through Europe and Asia to the Japanese and Australians, from the Copts of Egypt to the Kaffirs of South Africa, from the South Sea Islands of the Pacific through the ocean to Madagascar, the Bible has been rendered into

* The author here wishes to acknowledge a debt to Dr. C. H. Parkhurst for thoughts and quotations.

each language with triumphant success." Hallam, the historian, said, "I see that the Bible fits into every fold and crevice of the human heart. I am a man, and I believe that this is God's book because it is man's book." It is greater than any and every man. It is the book for the whole human race, and is destined to become so more and more. It speaks from God to the human soul. It penetrates to the innermost recesses of man's being, and satisfies the deepest yearnings of his nature. It is, as it claims to be, "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." It finds a man. It appeals to intellect, imagination and the sensibilities. The race and every individual needs redemption from sin, needs cleansing and stimulating. As long as the present order continues, there will be sin and sorrow, loneliness and death, for which no other book than the Bible can furnish a true antidote. Its universal adaptation to human needs reveals the wisdom of its author, and proves it to be divine.

3. *Its Permanence.*—A third reason why I believe the Bible is the book of God is based upon its permanence, the way in which it has survived the opposition of its foes and the abuses of its friends. What a history it has had! Through what fire and water and blood it has

passed! No other book has ever been so hated by bad men, and so abused by good men. It has been put under the ban of excommunication, has been criticised and ridiculed and burnt. Every possible resource of diabolic wrath has been exhausted in the attempt to destroy it, and yet it has gone marching steadily on. Every century has produced its quota of opponents; school after school of destructive criticism has arisen, each boasting of some new discovery, or the finding of some fatal flaw, that would destroy its power. But the critics pass away, their dogmatic assertions are proved fallacious, and the grand old book gains added might. And oh! how it has been abused by its supposed friends! It has been mistranslated and misapplied. It has been worshiped as an idol and consulted as an oracle. Its sayings have been wrested from context and used to prove well-nigh everything. It has been used as authority for slavery and polygamy, has been made to sanction an inquisition and the burning of witches, to support the subjugation of women and the divine right of kings. Scarcely any freak of fanaticism, any ism or ology, has arisen in Christian lands which has not sought justification in the Bible. And yet, in spite of such terrible opposition, and such fearful handicaps, the Bible stands to-day peerless in its power and majestic in its might.

The size of a force may be estimated by the

amount of its resistance, and the real worth of a thing by its fitness to survive, and when we try to estimate the forces which have been hurled against the Bible and which have been successfully resisted, we feel that it must have behind it the very dynamite of God; and, when we consider how it has survived the centuries amid such unfavorable surroundings, we feel convinced that it is because it is best fitted to survive. Not only has it survived the actions of foes and friends, but it keeps pace with all of the discoveries of science, history, and archeology. Newly discovered monuments and manuscripts, the researches of archeology and the discoveries of science only confirm its teachings, illumine its records and give new meaning and added applications to its truths.

4. *Its Past Influence and Present Power.*—A fourth reason why I believe the Bible is the book of God is based upon its past influence and its present power. Its past influence began with the earliest times, for the Bible contains the oldest literature extant. Some of its records were doubtless written one thousand years before Herodotus, the so-called father of history, was born. Hebrew legislation is at least seven hundred years older than the laws of Lycurgus; the lyric poetry of the Bible was in its golden age nine hundred years before Horace wrote his odes; the Proverbs of Solomon are fully eight hundred years older than the treatises of Seneca,

while the book of Job probably antedated Homer by eight centuries. Of the Bible it may be said, as Napoleon said to his army at the Pyramids, "Forty centuries look down upon you." And yet, during this long period of varied experiences, the Bible has triumphantly met the supreme test. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The influence of the Bible, wherever it has had largest and longest sway, has ever been productive of the highest results. It has always been the handmaid of progress. Froude, the historian, says of the influence of the Bible in human affairs, "All that we call modern civilization in a sense which deserves the name, is the visible expression of the transforming power of the gospel." Victoria, when asked the secret of England's national strength, pointed to the Bible and said: "This is the secret of the greatness of England." Of the power of the Bible in literature, Prof. Austin Phelps says: "The Bible is to a large extent incorporated in all of the living literature of the world; not in all in equal degrees, but in all sufficiently to be felt as power. The debt of literature to the Bible is like that of vegetation to light. The hymnology of all modern languages has been absolutely created by Hebrew Psalmody. The ancient classics, so far as I know, have not contributed a single stanza to it." The greatest of modern orators also have been inspired by the Bible. The Earl of Chatham, Patrick Henry, and

Daniel Webster constantly acknowledged their debt to its pages. Art has been revolutionized, and the dissolute Venus displaced by the Divine Madonna. The Bible has always had "the singular power of attracting to itself, as friend or foe, the thinkers of the world wherever it has gone. It, with the literature commenting upon it, is more voluminous than all that remains to us of Greek and Latin literature combined. The commentaries upon the Bible exceed 60,000 volumes, while the sermons of a single year would probably amount to more than 100,000,000 octavo pages." Yet this oldest of all printed books, which for centuries has wielded such a mighty influence, is to-day the freshest, most up-to-date, most widely circulated and most largely read of all books. He who says the Bible is out of date, or is losing its power, is either ignorant on the subject, or dishonest, or both. It never has been read and studied by as many people as to-day. It has a larger circulation than any other book in the world, and "Pilgrim's Progress," which is so largely a paraphrase of Scripture, comes second. A few cold facts from only one or two of the many large Bible publishing houses will make the force of this statement more apparent. Three presses in England alone printed last year 6,000,000 Bibles and parts of Bibles for Christian worship in 320 different languages, to go to all parts of the world, to say nothing of presses in America

and other lands. The daily output of the Oxford press is 4,000 Bibles, an average of 20,000 per week, or 1,000,000 each year. The weekly shipment to America of Oxford Bibles is five and one-half tons, and the demand is increasing. In the last twenty years, the demand for the Oxford Bible has doubled—500,000 copies issued in 1875, and 1,000,000 a year in 1896. The books of the British & Foreign Bible Society show likewise a marked yearly increase, 4,000,000 Bibles or portions of Bibles having been issued in one year, 1896. This one society, during the ninety-two years of its existence, has issued 147,000,000 copies of the Bible. These undeniable facts are evidence enough of the present power of the book, and of the fact that never before in its history have its teachings been so earnestly and largely studied. These four things, then, I present as some of the reasons why I believe the Bible to be the book of God—its wonderful unity with diversity, its universal adaptation to the needs of the race, its permanence in surviving the actions of foes and friends, and the advances of science and discoveries of archeology, and its past influence and present power. These four lines of evidence must amount to a demonstration to any candid mind, and bring the conviction that the Bible is none other than the word of God. No other cause is adequate to account for the effect. And yet there are in the soul of every believer

still stronger reasons for the abiding conviction that the Bible is the very book of God. The surest knowledge of the deepest realities comes from self-consciousness and personal experience—knowledge which cannot be expressed in syllogistic form. Mr. Huxley has told us that "the higher truths of life are within the reach of the æsthetic faculties only"; heart wisdom is safer than head wisdom, and life mightier than logic. And the best way, after all, to be convinced of the divine origin of the Bible, is to take it and try it; make it one's counselor and guide, and test it oneself by its fruits. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." Obey and you shall know; obedience is the organ of spiritual vision. If you will take the Bible and apply it to your life faithfully and fervently, you will find that it not only gives the very highest conceptions of life and truth, but also furnishes effective motive power to urge you on to these higher realities. The more intelligently, constantly and devoutly you use it, the higher will be the product; it will transform and build up; it will draw you Godward, and in doing so will convince you that it comes from God. And when others are inclined to criticise its sacred pages, or doubt its authority, you may well say, "If you take from me this book you must give me something better, something that will do more to bless our homes,

purge society, develop strength and sweetness of character, bring into human hearts love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith, temperance, will lessen the sorrows of life and lighten the tomb. Until you do this I shall hold to the book. I have absolute confidence in its being divine. It is the book of God. I know it through reason. I feel it in my heart, and no fires or storms can overthrow its power." Some one has thus spoken of the triumph of the Bible

"Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

'How many anvils have you had?' said I,
'To wear and batter all those hammers so?'
'Just one,' said he; then said with twinkling eye,
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'
And so I thought the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone."

False Trusts

1 Samuel 4:3.—"*Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that it may come among us, and save us out of the hand of our enemies.*"

IN order to understand the significance of the narrative from which these words are taken and to feel the peculiar force of the decision of this war-council, we need to recall the close relation into which God entered with Israel at Sinai, and the character, purpose and history of this ark of the covenant. When God had brought the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt by a mighty hand and with many signs of his power, he led them to the foot of Mt. Sinai, and there made a covenant with them; in which covenant he said that, if they would obey his commands as revealed through the great mediator Moses, he would be in a peculiar sense their God, and they should be to him a peculiar people. The people answered, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do. And Moses took the blood and sprin-

kled it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you upon all these conditions.'" This was the covenant of Sinai. God promised to lead and bless Israel, and Israel promised to follow his leading and to obey his commands. But Israel was a nation of children, a mob of slaves just freed from an awful Egyptian bondage. They were not prepared fully to grasp great spiritual truths. They needed to be taught by blocks, pictures and symbols. God's leadership was therefore manifested to them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. God's presence in their midst was made real to them by the pitching of the Tabernacle in the middle of the camp. God's covenant-relation to them was kept ever fresh in their minds by the ark of the covenant, with its tables of stone, its cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat, and its shekinah glory. This ark of the covenant—a rectangular box 3 feet 9 inches long and 2 feet 3 inches wide and high, having rings on each side and staves by which it could be carried, overlaid within and without with gold, with its glittering golden top surmounted by the cherubim whose faces were toward each other and whose wings were spread out on high, containing the two tables of stone upon which the ten words of God's commands were inscribed—this ark of the covenant, when Israel encamped, rested with solitary grandeur

within the sacred precincts of the Holies of Holies; but, when Israel was on the march, the ark was carried by the priests at the head of the procession, the significant symbol of Jehovah's presence and Jehovah's power. During all of the dreary and dangerous marches through the wilderness the ark was borne before them. When the next generation came to cross the Jordan it was the ark of the covenant that still led them on. When the feet of the priests that carried it had touched the river's brink Jordan's waters were divided, and the priests bore the sacred symbol into the midst of the river-bed, where they continued to stand until all of the chosen people had passed over dryshod. Around the walls of doomed Jericho this same ark was carried in confident triumph. Everywhere it became the striking reminder of the covenant relation, of Jehovah's presence, and of the power of Israel's God.

But, after Israel had become settled in the promised land—when the tribes had received their inheritances; when Joshua, their great leader, had died; when the people had become absorbed in building up their private fortunes; when a period of general disorganization had followed and every one was doing that which was right in his own eyes—then came a time of conscious self-sufficiency when the people no longer felt their need of God's guidance and protection,

when the ark of the covenant was left comparatively unnoticed at its shrine at Shiloh, when the priesthood of the degenerate sons of Eli was a reproach and a shame, when the forms of faith were still maintained, but when vital confidence in the living God well-nigh perished from among his people. Such was the condition of things when war broke out again between Israel and their old hereditary foes of the coast-land, the Philistines. In one of the first battles of this war Israel was severely defeated, four thousand infantry being slain. At the close of the fight the elders of Israel called a council of war to examine into the causes of their defeat. Doubtless many things were suggested and many plans were considered. But finally this opinion prevailed: that the cause of defeat was that they had not carried into the battle the ark of the covenant. The decision of the war-board was expressed in the words of our text, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that it may come among us, and save us out of the hand of our enemies." No sooner had the war-board come to this decision than messengers were dispatched at once to bring from Shiloh the long-neglected ark. When the degenerate sons of Eli bore the sacred relic into Israel's despondent camp, the people went almost mad with joy; and the hills, that had just recently witnessed their inglorious defeat, echoed with

their shouts of gladness. The Philistines, having inquired into the cause of this rejoicing, and having learned that the ark of God had been brought into Israel's midst, were stricken with superstitious fear; but the dread of defeat and subsequent slavery, and the stirring speeches of their leaders, nerved them for the coming conflict. Soon the battle was renewed; the Israelites, doubtless, confidently forcing the fight. The Philistines fought with the courage and abandon of desperate men; while Israel calmly trusted in the ark of God to deliver them. But alas! what a false trust it proved to be! Israel was terribly defeated! "Every man fled to his tent, and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain." Surely there are in the whole of Biblical history few more striking pictures of false confidence. This people did not say, "Let us repent of our sins and selfish neglect of God; let us turn to him in penitence and prayer, and our God shall help us fight our battles. Through him we shall surely conquer." Instead of this they said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that *it* may come among us, and save us out of the hands of our enemies." They trusted in the symbol instead of in the living God, and learned to their sorrow that they were relying upon a false trust.

All down through history we see illustrations of this same temptation and tendency to put confidence in creed and ritual, symbol and ceremony, in the place of a vital personal trust in a living God. For example: God gave to the Jews the rite of circumcision as a symbol of separation, "a token of the covenant" between him and them. It was intended to remind them of the necessity on their part to live righteously, and to remember at all times their peculiar relation and duties toward Jehovah. It should have led them to humble, thankful, faithful lives; but instead of that they soon turned it into a badge of pride and a basis of salvation, and taught everywhere, even in New Testament times, with respect to Gentiles saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Again, Christ gave to his disciples and to the Christian church the beautiful ordinance of baptism, a striking symbol of the death and burial of the old self, and of the resurrection to a newness of life on the part of the believer. Baptism was given as a photograph of an internal, spiritual experience. But soon the tendency to trust in symbol and ceremony appeared even in the Christian church; and people began to rely upon baptism as a saving ordinance. This error led to many irregularities in church practice, and to the gathering into the church of many unregenerate persons who trusted

in the rite for salvation; for apart from baptism it was supposed that there was no salvation, and to all who were baptized salvation was considered a certainty. Christ also gave to his disciples, and through them to his church, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, a beautiful picture of the source and condition of the Christian's life and growth; the feeding upon the Bread of Heaven, and the Body of Christ, his life and strength being the source of our life and strength. But it was not long until this ordinance also was perverted, people beginning to treat it as a sacrament and to trust in it for salvation. Both of these ordinances were given as aids to faith, not as substitutes for faith. As the church continued to depart from the principles and practices of the apostles, pictures and images and relics of the apostles and of the so-called saints were introduced, at first doubtless as an aid to devotion. But soon the old tendency again appeared; and the people began to pray to the pictures, and to bow down before the images and relics. But let us not seem to be too severe upon our Catholic friends, nor criticise too harshly their reliance upon ceremony and symbol; lest we hear the words of Jesus applied to us, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." Let us not for a moment suppose that in our own churches there is no tendency to rest for salvation upon creed and ritual and ceremony. We, too, need to be on our guard

against all such false trusts. Let us ask, then, a few very plain questions; and let us seek very definite answers.

1. "Will a profession of faith, or membership in a church, or the performance of a rite, these things which are supposed to be external symbols of an internal living experience, will these save anybody from the penalty or power of sin in this life; or in the life to come?" Will they? Is there any evidence from revelation, or from reason, or from history, observation, or experience, that there is any real salvation in these things? Do they save? Can they save? Will they save? What does Scripture say? "Follow peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12: 14). "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. *Be not deceived:* neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6: 9-10). Of certain people Paul wrote in his day to Titus, and said, "They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Tit. 1: 16). James, the practical essayist of the New Testament, says, "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?" (Jas. 2: 14).

Can a profession of faith that is not the expression of a life of faith save anybody? A faith that does not work? James does not need to answer his question. Truth is often more tersely told in the interrogatory form. He leaves each person to answer it for himself, well knowing that there can be but one intelligent answer to such a question. "Can that faith save him?" Our Savior, on the occasion of Nicodemus' visit, took special pains to make this matter very plain and clear. Nicodemus was a member of the church of that day, high up in church circles, a member of the Sanhedrin, one of the most august religious councils that ever convened. Nicodemus was probably a good man in every sense of that word. And yet Jesus said to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3: 3). Does the Scripture anywhere say, "Blessed are the members of the church, for they shall see God"? Does the Scripture at any place say, "Blessed are they that have been baptized, for they shall see God"? What saith the Scripture? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Our Savior said, "Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine, and *doeth* them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock." "And every one that heareth these words of mine, and *doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house

upon the sand (a false trust)" (Matt. 7: 24-27). Paul exclaims in triumph in Romans, eighth chapter, first verse, "There is therefore now *no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*" To whom? To those that are in the church? It does not say that! "*To them that are in Christ Jesus.*" To those that were trusting in circumcision, in a rite, as the basis of salvation, Paul said, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6: 15). The new person is the Christian, the saved person. The gospel plan of salvation is nothing less than a way to save men and women by saving manhood and womanhood. It aims and expects to save the soul; or, as the new version so strikingly and literally translates the word, to save the life. The soul is the life. Jesus came that we "might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10). The plan of gospel salvation is not a fancifully-devised scheme to save bad men and women *in* their sins; but to save sinful men and women *from* their sins. It is God's glorious way to make us all men and women in Christ Jesus. It is not a way by which rich, red, ripe, luscious fruits can be hung on rotten boughs. "It is a remedy for the roots of things." And "fruits come from roots." Salvation begins in a changed heart, and continues in a changed character. The gospel does not save apart from self, but by saving the

self; by changing our lives, and by building us up into the likeness of Christ. It is, in its initial purpose, a kingdom of character that Christ came to establish; to save individuals, and then through them to save society. Toward this glorious goal we are to look, and to work, and to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." In that kingdom those only shall have a part whose names are registered in the book of life. (Rev. 20: 15.) You must register as a citizen, amenable to the laws of the state, if you would enjoy its privileges. All rebels will be shut out from its life and its liberty. The Father's house is for his children. Sonship is manifested in doing the Father's will. "This is the work of God, that you should believe on Him whom He has sent" (John 6: 29). To as many as received Him to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1: 12). Citizenship and sonship are dependent upon obedience and filial faith. It should not the less concern us that our names should be upon the church-book, and that we should submit to all rites or ceremonies established of God and expressive of high spiritual truth; but it should infinitely the more concern us that our names should surely be written in the Book of Life, and that our lives should be lives of faith in and fellowship with God through Christ. The one important question for all of us is, "Is

Christ reigning in my life?" "Am I obedient to His commands?" If so, then I shall not be without his presence here and now; and nothing can separate me from him then and there. For "Christ in me" is the "hope of glory." "To live is Christ, to die is gain." But, if my life is only a profession without him as a possession, if I live apart from him here; I must depart from him there. Of certain who trusted in church-membership, creed, ceremony, ritual, religious acts, Jesus predicted sure disappointment: "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many mighty works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' "

2. "Will membership in a lodge save any one from the penalty and power of sin here, or from disappointment hereafter?" Will it? The writer is not opposed to lodges in themselves. To whatever is good and helpful in lodges let us give our glad approval. Whatever will really help us to feel the brotherhood of men and women, to cultivate a spirit of mutual helpfulness, to encourage the better in us and to keep down the worse, to develop us into symmetrical, sympathetic, manly men and womanly women should be encouraged by every means. To the extent that the lodge does these things it is an aid

to life. Lodges have properly a place in good society, and probably always will have; but let us keep them in their place. Let us not put them in the place of Christ, nor let them be regarded as a substitute for a true religious life. There is no good reason why a person may not be a member of any respectable lodge, and still be a Christian. There is nothing in Masonry, for instance, that is of itself opposed to the religion of Christ. You are taught in Masonry that you can only overcome through "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." "In hoc signo vinces," is a good Christian motto. In many of the lodges high principles of life are taught, and many helpful lessons of truth are strikingly impressed upon men and women amid the romantic scenes of degree work; but let us recognize the limitations of the lodge, and let us never forget our need of a personal submission of heart and life to a personal and powerful Savior. Many have lived and died trusting in the rites and ceremonies of lodges, of whose salvation we have no reasonable hope. Many people put the lodge in the place of the church, and thus are kept away from hearing of and accepting a personal Christ, and from using the means of grace that lead to a strong Christian life. That to many people the lodge is a great hindrance instead of a help there can be no doubt. If every one who is a member of a lodge will at all times put Christ and the church first, the lodge will not interfere

with his highest welfare. If Christian men and women are members of the lodge, let them see to it that no duty to the lodge shall ever interfere with duty to Christ and to the church. Put Christ and His church first. Let Christian men and women, who are members of lodges, see to it that all parts of the ritual in which the Bible, or high moral truth, or the Deity, are mentioned shall be given by thoroughly Christian people. Let there never be any such mocking mouthing as is sometimes witnessed at lodge funerals, when men with bleared eyes, liquor-perfumed breath, and unbelieving hearts speak with elocutionary effort of eternal realities. Let no one deceive himself or herself with mere phrases, nor be blinded by the glitter and glare of ceremony. Let the truth be clearly known. No membership in any lodge or society will save anybody from the penalty of sin or from the power of sin, either here or hereafter.

3. "Has not a person a good reason to believe that he is saved, if he feels saved, or if he is not disturbed concerning sin?" No, this is not a good test, nor the basis of a rational reliance. We cannot safely trust to our feelings in so important a matter. Scripture distinctly warns us of the fact that the unrenewed human heart "is exceedingly deceitful above all things." A writer of Proverbs says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14: 12). A false trust like a wrong road

cannot lead us to the desired haven. We cannot safely trust our feelings. They rise and fall as the tide ebbs and flows. When coming out of Chicago the Rock Island Railroad and the Lake Shore Railroad run on parallel tracks, side by side, as far as Englewood. A person on the Rock Island would leave from the same depot, travel in the same direction for several miles, and might easily suppose that he was going to the same destination as the people on the Lake Shore train; but his thinking so would not make it so. He is on the wrong train. Sooner or later the tracks will cease to be parallel, and the trains will head in different directions. If you wish to reach a desired destination, you must be careful to take the right train. We cannot trust our feelings. Some years ago in the Northwest certain strangers to that country were out for a sleigh-ride. The day before had been warm and pleasant. But a sudden change of weather had brought a sixty-degree drop in the thermometer. The air was cold and dry and still. As the sleigh glided over the snow in the quiet of the Northwest winter day the driver said, "Look out for your ears." One of the strangers laughed at the suggestion and replied, "My ears don't feel cold." To which the driver said, "Yes, that may be so; but up here in this dry cold you'll freeze your ears before you know it. You can't trust to your feelings." And the stranger wisely wrapped up his ears.

Experienced travelers in snow-bound countries would never think of lying down in the snow because of the fact that they feel comfortable, and do not notice the winter's chill. The "feeling-comfortable" is the best evidence that the system is already being benumbed with cold, and that to rest in the snow would mean certain death. The comfortable feeling which many unforgiven sinners profess is just the best evidence of the paralyzing power of sin, and of the deceitfulness of feeling as a guide to duty or safety. The mariner in the fog may feel that he is guiding his vessel aright; but he will not be wise if he neglects the chart and compass. Oh, that every unsaved person here to-night would cease to rely upon feelings, and would at once cry out from the innermost self:

> "Chart and compass come from Thee,
> Jesus Savior, pilot me."

4. "But if one tries to live a clean, white, sincere life, will he not be saved?" Yes, if he has never sinned, and never shall sin on throughout his whole life. Sin is the only thing which destroys largest life, and separates from peace and from God. Where there is unconfessed and unremoved sin, there can be no rest, and no true fellowship with Him. If a person has always lived a perfectly righteous life, and shall continue so to do from day to day, such an one certainly has no need of a Savior. So far as he is concerned Christ

came and died in vain; for he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10). But let none of us deceive ourselves. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Have you never sinned? Have you always from the first moment of conscious and responsible choice kept God's commands? The first one is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22: 37). Have you always kept even God's first command? Have you? If so, there is "a second like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22: 39). Have you always kept the second command? Ah, no; many a time each one of us has put the interests of self before those of God and of our brother. Each one of us has failed in filial worship Godward and in fraternal service manward. Each one of us will find in the teaching of the third chapter of Romans a true photograph of self: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." If the blind man needs a guide, and the cripple needs a crutch, surely the sinner needs a Savior. No supposed righteousness of our own can stand the test of time and of eternity. If we are saved at all, we must be saved by Christ alone. "In none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given

among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12). And we are saved not by virtue of any inherent righteousness or goodness of our own, but by virtue of his righteousness which becomes our own through faith in and fellowship with him. "Being justified freely through his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith by his blood" (Rom. 3: 24). "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4: 4-5) Christ alone can save us. "For by grace have ye been saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, that no man should glory" (Eph. 2: 8-9). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16: 31). He alone is able to save; and "He is able to save unto the uttermost all them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7: 25). "Apart from me ye can do nothing." Through Him "we are more than conquerors." We cannot have sunlight without the sun; nor can we have salvation without the Savior. To have life we need the Lord of Life. To have peace we must have the Prince of Peace. To be a Christian we must have Christ. If we have Him, all things are ours. If we are without

Him, we have nothing. "He that hath the Son hath life: he that hath not the Son hath not life" (1 John 5: 12).

5. "If, then, church membership does not save, if creed and ritual and ceremony do not save, if a profession of faith does not save, what necessity is there for any one to confess Christ openly, or to join the church? Why not quietly accept Christ as a personal Savior, and live as a secret follower of him?" For all who wish to be honest, obedient disciples of the Master one answer only is sufficient for such a question. Every one who has accepted Christ ought to confess him openly before men and join the church, which is his body, of which he is the head, because *obedience to him requires it.* His great commission to his disciples was, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you" (Matt. 28: 18-20). These disciples went out from the school of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and preached the gospel everywhere. As soon as people received the message and the Master, the disciples baptized them into the church, and taught them the means of grace. This is the way of life established by Christ himself. We must not disregard it nor disobey him. If we do, by what authority of revelation or reason can we call

ourselves, or expect others to regard us, as his disciples? Surely only those who are following him are his followers. The Savior Himself has given the test, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14: 15). And again the Master said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I command you?" (Luke 6: 46). Surely, as some one has said, "Unless we crown him Lord of all, we do not crown him Lord at all." To receive him into the heart, and to confess him before men by lip and by life are the conditions of blessing. "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10: 9-10). The first and foremost reason why every one who has accepted Christ should confess him before men and join the church,—which is the only divinely organized and divinely established society on earth; the church, which He has purchased with his own precious blood; the church, of which he is the corner-stone and the cap-stone; the church, which will some day be the glory of the whole earth—the great reason why you should come out from the world and take your stand with God's people is because Christ commands it. Obedience to him is reason sufficient. And then, too, you need to use God's own

appointed means of grace, in order that you may grow in grace and in the knowledge of His will. We need social and public worship as well as private devotion. For symmetry of character, for breadth of view, for stimulus in service, we all need to heed the warning of Hebrews, the tenth chapter and the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another." The church is the one great organized representative of our Savior's cause upon earth. It is not perfect; but it is by all odds the very best society on earth. It is not perfect, because it is made up of imperfect men and women, like ourselves: but it has done more, and is doing more, on earth for our Lord and Master than all other societies put together. It needs and deserves our heartiest co-operation. If we are obedient and loyal to him, we will love what he loves; and it does seem from the declarations of Scripture, and from the providences of Christian history that the church of God is the apple of his eye. It has been honored by him above all things else. It is through the church that he is determined to manifest his manifold wisdom. (Eph. 3: 10.) One great end of his work is declared to be, "that he might himself present to himself the church, glorious, not having a spot, or wrinkle, or any

such thing, but that it may be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). It is through the church that the great blessings of the gospel are to be brought to a lost world. Let us honor the church as our Lord and Master is pleased to honor her. We need her help, and she needs our lives. Your associates, also, have a right to know where you stand. You cannot afford to be a stumbling block in the path of others. If Christ is a wonderful Savior, let us not be ashamed of him. Let us give him our whole hearts, and whatever power our lives and our influence may have and may acquire. "We are not our own." Let us "render unto God the things that are God's."

6. But do you ask, "What branch of the church shall I join?" Act as wisely here as you act in other departments of life. When you were thinking of getting married, there were plenty of possibilities, plenty of good and noble young men and women. What did you do? If you were wise, you chose that young man or woman who came nearest to your intelligent ideal, the one whose life would be most complemental to and supplemented by your own highest life. You did not find anywhere one who was in all respects ideal. You did the best that you could under the circumstances. Now act just as sensibly with reference to joining the church. Go to your Bible and get Christ's ideal of the church. See what sort of a church it was that he established.

Having gotten an intelligent ideal, ask God to lead you to that branch of the church that comes nearest to that Biblical and Christly picture. Join the church of your own convictions. Never shut your eyes upon any truth that has been made plain to you. Having gone to your Bible for instruction, and to God in prayer for guidance, and, remembering that to be a member of the church means both to help and to be helped, both to give and to get, join that branch of the church which seems best to meet your requirements. If you have recently accepted Christ, join the church of your choice *at the very earliest opportunity*. You cannot afford to delay in this duty and privilege. If you are an older Christian, and are not now connected with any visible church in the community where you live, you are not making your life count for Christ as you could and should. Take up again and at once your duties as a follower of the Master, and enter into the joy of a strong, out and out, manly or womanly Christian life. We have no business to play at religion. These things of Christ are gloriously and fearfully true, and deserve our best selves; or else they are foolish fables and are beneath our contempt. But we have every reason to believe that they are magnificently true. They deserve our all. Let us, then, acquit ourselves like men, and be somebody and something for Christ, and for his church. Two fatal tendencies have mani-

fested themselves with reference to religion, one in the direction of formalism, the other in the direction of mysticism. They are the Scylla and Charybdis of church history. In one direction you will find all ritualistic churches with dead formalism and lack of real life. In the other direction you will find all such formless faiths as theosophy, Christian science, spiritualism, etc. The one are crushed beneath the burden of form: the other are dissipated into indefiniteness and haziness. The golden mean between these formal and formless faiths is occupied by the religion of Jesus; essentially spiritual in its nature, and embodied forth in the simplest of forms, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and personal membership in a visible church. Here is the path of peace and power. Between these rocks of ruin, formalism and mysticism, may the Lord Jesus Christ safely guide each one of us forever!

"Jesus, Savior, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal;
Chart and compass come from Thee;
Jesus, Savior, pilot me."

The Manliness of Christianity

Joshua 24. 15.—"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

NO one can read the impassioned addresses of the great characters of Bible history without being impressed with the manliness of their appeals and with the reasonableness of righteousness. Moses at Sinai plainly declared to the children of Israel the conditions of blessing, and urged them to accept them. Throughout his whole life he encouraged them to serve God and to refrain from evil, and all would be well with them. And then, when about to leave them at the close of his life, Moses called all of the people together to give them his parting advice, and in one of those magnificent orations of Deuteronomy he said, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that thou and thy seed may live, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, that thou mayest obey his voice, that thou mayest cleave unto him, for he is thy life." Is not that

a manly appeal? It is straight from the shoulder, and as strong as truth itself. David, on his death-bed, plead with his son Solomon, and said, "I am about to die. Be strong therefore, and shew thyself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord thy God to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes and his commandments and his testimones, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest and whithersoever thou turnest thyself." Isaiah said, "Come, let us reason together." "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is the rock of ages." It is a reasonable thing to trust Him. Jeremiah gave this appeal: "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old ways, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Joel urged the people of his day, "Therefore [because of the character of God, and of your need of him] turn ye unto God with all your heart; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness." (He is yearning to bless you as soon as you fulfill the conditions and make it possible.) All of these appeals are of the same manly sort. The writers of the so-called "Wisdom Books of the Old Testament" continually picture forth the great folly of sin and the reasonableness of righteousness. Indeed, as Professor Moulton says, "The fundamental topic of the Book of Proverbs is the world controversy between good and evil, wisdom and folly. The

great folly, according to Proverbs, is to think that there is any other path toward permanent advantage except through right doing," i. e., through practical righteousness. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge [or, as the margin reads, "the chief part of knowledge"], but fools despise wisdom and instruction." And history and observation, as well as Revelation, insist and agree upon the folly of living without hope, and apart from God. The writer of Ecclesiastes was a splendid observer of life, a student of affairs, a philosopher, as well as one who had experienced all sorts of human joys and sorrows; and, reviewing his life and studies, he wrote in the last chapter of his book, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the duty of every man."

In the New Testament likewise the appeals of God to men are of the same manly kind. Christ in the great Sermon on the Mount closed the discourse by contrasting the folly of sin and the reasonableness of right-doing: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them [Is that a photograph of you?] I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings

of mine and doeth them not [He had just been urging men and women to enter by the straitened gate into the way that leads to Life, and to avoid the broad road to destruction] "he that heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth them not* [Is that a true description of you?] shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell: and great was the fall of it." Thus everywhere in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, the main appeal is directed to the reason, the conscience, and the will; while the folly of sin is set forth with fearful vividness, and the wisdom of right-doing is faithfully pictured in proverb and parable, in the history of individual and of national life.

So also the appeal of Joshua, a part of which I have taken as a text, is in line with the manly, straightforward statements of right and wrong, wisdom and folly, so characteristic of the Scriptures. Joshua was now an old man about to die. He was a veteran with a valiant record. He had led the army of invasion and conquest in triumph through the land of Canaan. He was the hero of many a battle, loved and honored by his soldiers and by all of the people. Before he died he called all together in a great convocation; and, after rehearsing the wonderful blessings of God upon them in times past, he restated his own faith in

the living God, and urged upon them in the words of the text, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This ancient incident reminds one very forcibly of a modern Joshua. It was in the battle of Santiago Bay, when the hand of God had been so striking manifested in human history, when the American navy had sent the Spanish fleet to the bottom of the Atlantic: then it was that Captain John Philip, of the battleship Texas, another Joshua, called the men of his command upon deck, and, after declaring to them his faith in God, called upon them to bow their heads while he led in prayer. And to-night, as an humble member of "the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. 12: 23), as a preacher of righteousness, I desire to urge upon every one here the wisdom of right living, and the desirability of giving yourself at once to Christ, and to a Christ-like life. Among the many reasons why you ought to do this now, one reason only should be sufficient. It is the manliest thing to do. I use the word manhood as descriptive of all that is largest and best in human character and in human life, not in the sense of sex. I use the word manhood in the sense of Bailey's saying:

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial. *He most lives*
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

This is truest manhood. Is it high, and deep, and large thinking that you desire? Nowhere else will so much of it be aroused as through faith in and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The intellectuality of Jesus leads the ages. He saw intuitively what we only arrive at after a long process of reasoning. He himself was the Way and the Truth; He was the Light of the world. No wonder that Paul, that colossal intellect of the early church, the man who wrestled with the great thoughts of the gospel, prayed for the Ephesians that they "might be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." If you desire large and long and big thoughts, become a disciple of Christ. Is it noble feelings that you desire? Then begin at once to fellowship with him who is the real "Mr. Greatheart" of history, that man whose heart was ever open to the cry of human need, whose eyes were often wet with the tears of kindly compassion and sincerest sympathy. It is best actions that you would do? Then no more inspirational Leader can be found than he whose life was always so noble and true that he could give the bold challenge: "Who convicteth me of sin?" so noble and so true that he could say of his own life: "I do always those things that please Him." As Bailey has said: "He most lives who thinks most, feels the

noblest, acts the best." This is truest manhood; and this is what true Christianity means. To be a Christian does not mean primarily to submit to creed or ritual or ceremony. To be a Christian means fundamentally fellowship, friendship, communion, a personal relationship between the individual soul and the living Christ. It means life with Christ both here and hereafter. And who is the Christ? The manliest man that ever lived. No one ever began to realize the magnificent possibilities of manhood, of human character and life, until Christ lived his life. No true and complete estimate of humanity can be made which does not take into consideration the manhood of Christ. In Him manhood was at its maximum. He was pre-eminently *the man*, the Son of man, the perfect man. He must forever stand at the apex of mankind. No improvement can be made upon Him. Every skeptic and scoffer has been compelled to doff his hat to the Man of Nazareth. In him we find every virtue carried to its highest excellence; in Him we find no vice, even in its lightest form. The verdict of all who carefully scrutinize his character must be but a re-echoing of the judgment of Pilate: "I find no fault in him." Christ possessed and combined, in the most remarkable way, "every grace and every virtue which human nature ever has displayed, or ever will display, in the course of its universal development: matchless beauty

spotless purity, stainless splendor; strength with gentleness, courage with tenderness, charity with righteousness"; the lowliest and yet the lordliest, the meekest and yet the mightiest of men. It is with this magnificent man that you are asked to fellowship through Christian faith. I wish that you would give me to-night the distinguished honor of introducing to you my Friend, Jesus of Nazareth. Is he not worthy of your friendship? What will you do with my Friend? "What will you do with Jesus? What shall the answer be?" When I read of this man of Galilee, I marvel that any can reject him. When I see this wonderful man walking along the streets of Jerusalem, a man measureless in the might and magnitude of his manhood, I wonder that all do not immediately fall in love with him, and become at once his ardent followers. Instead of that your brothers and mine (with shame let it be told!), instead of that your brothers and mine picked up the loose stones of the street, and hurled them at him. No wonder that with a bleeding heart He turned and asked: "For what deed do you stone me?" And as his friend I ask you to-night: "Why do you stone the Christ?" No missile that was ever thrown at Him ever hurt so much as the stones of indifference, ingratitude and unbelief that some of you are hurling at Him now. Are *you* thus stoning Christ? If so, for what do you stone him? For His matchless character? Or

for his marvellous teaching? Or for His unselfish life? Or for his sacrificial death on your behalf. Tell me, for what do you stone my Christ?

Did you never have the inspiring friendship of some lofty, noble soul? Do you remember how, when you were in the presence of that friend, every base thought or desire in you would seem to steal away much as snakes slink away into the darkness? Do you not remember how, when you were in the presence of that friend, it was so easy for you to have good thoughts, and to do good deeds? Do you not remember the stimulus, the peace, the comfort that always came to you through that friendship? The Lord Jesus Christ would be an even greater Friend and Helper to you, if only you would accept him as your Savior and Guide. If you are honestly prosperous, and in the enjoyment of many blessings, he will not lessen your joy. He always adds sunlight to daylight, and will make the happy man a happier man. If you are in the midst of sorrow and adversity and many difficulties, let me assure you that "There's no Friend to have like Jesus!" What a source of inspiration, comfort and strength is found in faith in and fellowship with such a manly man and with such a mighty Savior! Dr. John Clifford has told a story of the influence of F. W. Robertson at Brighton that well illustrates the power of a noble friendship. A gentleman, some years after Robertson's death, made a visit

to Brighton to collect, if possible, some fresh personal reminiscences of that great English preacher. As he went from place to place he finally stopped in a bookstore, where he found in the person of the proprietor an old and intimate friend of Robertson. With glowing face and with loving words the bookseller told many a characteristic incident of the preacher's remarkable life and work. Finally, when the stranger was about to depart, the bookseller led him back through the alcoves to the parlor of his home, which was in the rear of his store. Quickly throwing open the shutter, the bookseller pointed to a beautiful, lifesize, lifelike painting of Robertson that hung upon the wall, and said, "There is my friend! That looks just like him! And, you know, when I get discouraged sometimes in my business, just as soon as I can I come back here and open the shutter and take a look at his strong, manly face; and it helps me to be strong. And some days I am tempted to drive a close bargain, or to commit some sin, and as soon as I can I come here and take another look at his face, and again I am strengthened to do the right and to resist the wrong." Friends! If the picture of F. W. Robertson hung in the back parlor of a book-seller's store will do so much to discourage the evil and to encourage the good, so much to stimulate and nerve and cheer, so much to make for manhood; what will not the living Christ do for anyone who will open his heart to Him!

The Growth of the Kingdom of God

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Matthew 13:31-33.—"Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened."

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HOW strange and startling some of the teachings of Jesus must have seemed to those who heard him utter them! And yet every year of Christianity's lengthening history reveals more strikingly the sanity and the sublimity of many of these same apparently extravagant sayings. Here was an humble peasant of the proverbially despised town of Nazareth, living in the midst of the hastening dissolution of a conquered country, with no money, no standing, and no

strong party behind him, with no past or present to boast of and no future except the black shadow and curse of a culprit's crucifixion just about to fall upon him—here was such an one confidently declaring, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Could ever words have seemed more rash and more extravagant! And yet, as the centuries roll along, science tells us that this world of ours is gradually but surely wearing out, the mountains and the hills wasting away, the seas drying up, and the sun consuming itself; while at the same time the undeniable facts of life prove that the words of this wonderful man are being more and more treasured and studied as next to himself God's best gift to men. A small bit of parchment that contained twenty-five of his words written by his own hand would outrival the treasures of all the museums of earth. In the light of two thousand years how sane and sublime this saying about his words is seen to be!

Again, this same unknown teacher, this obscure carpenter of Nazareth, said, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father, neither doth anyone know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye

shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." How strange and startling such a statement from such an one! How insane and extravagant it must have seemed! And yet, at the dawn of the twentieth century, millions who have learned only through him the way to God, and who, pillowing their heads upon his gentle breast, have found in him the rest of heaven and in his service the joy of life, leap with exultation at the mere opportunity to rise and say, "He told me the truth: we have found it to be even as he said." How strange and startling must those Beatitudes have sounded, so contrary as they were to popular thought! How bold and extravagant must have appeared that Sermon on the Mount! And yet, after all these years, these sayings of Jesus stand peerless and majestic amid the mountain tops of the world's ethical teaching, the loftiest moral code ever spoken by the lips of man, the recognized ideal of human conduct. How apparently extravagant were the claims that he made! "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." "I am the light of the world." "I am the bread of life." "I do always those things that please Him." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also." These are a few of his apparently extravagant claims; and yet with the increasing years the world is more and more ready to grant these claims to be true, every one of them true, tremendously true, gloriously

true. If Nicodemus, that learned leader of the Jews, impressed by the miracles which Jesus did, was compelled to confess, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that thou doest except God be with him;" it is still more evident that the modern world, impressed more by moral truth than by physical miracle, is being gradually compelled by the majesty of Christ's person and by the sanity and sublimity of his sayings to confess, "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no one can teach as thou teachest except God be with him." And if a God-sent teacher, then a reliable teacher; and we can rest confidently in what he taught about himself and his kingdom, God and man, sin and salvation, time and eternity.

How sane and sublime his teaching concerning the growth of the kingdom of God, which he came to establish, now appears; and yet how strange and extravagant at the time it must have seemed! With a majestic calm and with an unearthly confidence he predicted that his kingdom, though beginning obscurely and small, would have a great development and would ultimately leaven all. Many a time in the centuries since have the very best of his followers seriously questioned the outcome of the spiritual conflict; but Jesus never questioned it. Amid all of the various conflicts of his tumultuous life, broken-hearted, though he saw

himself "despised and rejected of men," though he saw clearly the approaching cross and went bravely to his apparent doom; yet we never find him uttering a single syllable of discouragement or despair over the final outcome of his work. Even under the shadow of that cross he confidently and comfortingly said to his discomfited disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This assurance of Jesus of the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God appears all the more sublime when we keep in mind the greatness of his conception of that kingdom and his undimmed view of the difficulties in the way of its realization. His idea of the kingdom of God was a big one! Not the narrow, national, material, temporal idea of the Jews of his day. His conception was of a kingdom world-wide and age-long; as broad as humanity, as deep as human need, as high as the holiness and happiness of heaven, as long as eternity; a kingdom of spiritual regeneration and divine life, of love, joy, peace in the Holy Spirit, of the realized rulership of God in the human heart and in human society. No other man knew so well as he how contrary all this was to the temper of the times and to the spirit of a selfish world. No one knew so well as he what such a kingdom would cost. Yet his confidence was complete. His was not the blind enthusiasm of a rabid fanatic, nor the wild delirium of a shortsighted reformer, but the forceful calm of a master mind

that comprehensively grasped the outcome of the centuries. He would not have his disciples suppose for a moment that the kingdom of God would come easily, or without a long and terrible conflict with evil; but he did wish them never to doubt that it would surely and triumphantly come. In the parable of the sower He made it plain that while much seed would fall by the wayside or upon stony ground or upon soil filled with thorn seed, and three-fourths of it might seem to perish, some would fall into good ground and bring forth fruit unto perfection. In the parable of the tares it was made clear that hindrances would beset even the seed that took root downward and sprang upwards, and the tares would be allowed to grow and would seem to grow just as vigorously as the wheat, even unto the harvest; but there would ultimately be a harvest and a separation, the tares to be burnt, the wheat to be safely garnered. Difficulties? Yes. Small beginnings? Yes. Slow growth? Yes. But it will grow; grow tremendously; grow externally and visibly, like the mustard seed; grow internally and pervasively, until the whole is leavened. Again and again through the months as the shadows darkened, Jesus must often have re-emphasized these teachings to the slowly learning disciples, and during the last days he spent much time alone with his disciples in lovingly trying to strengthen their faith and clarify their vision. Nor was his tone of tri-

umph in any way lowered or lessened during these trying and darkening hours. How confidently he declared to the woman who anointed his feet that her act should be remembered, "wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world!" How constantly he referred to himself as the coming judge of all and declared that the ultimate fate of all mankind was to be determined by their relation to himself! "He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father." Then the blow fell! The arrest, the hasty trial, the awful crucifixion, the death, the burial, followed one another with staggering rapidity! No wonder that, stunned by these startling events, they all forsook him and fled. No wonder that dark despair brooded over all of the disciples, and that the assurances of a resurrection and a growing kingdom of power suffered in their minds for a time a complete eclipse! But the tomb could not hold him long! He rose from the dead, triumphant over the grave, and proved to his dismayed disciples that he was a trustworthy teacher, and that things had happened just as he had said they would. When at length their hopes for the successful establishment of his kingdom began to revive, and they asked, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" he answered, "It is not for you to know times or

seasons which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." How unpromising from a human point of view was the outlook for the kingdom on the days immediately following Christ's crucifixion, and even after his resurrection! And yet he confidently declared, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo I am with you, even unto the end of the world." How overpowering in its sublimity is "the calm assurance with which," as Dr. Lorimer says, "Jesus announces the impregnability of his kingdom, and sends forth his humble followers—friendless, homeless, defenceless—to disciple the nations, or, in other words, to Christianize the world! This great commission is the very superlative of fanaticism, or it is the commonplace of conscious divinity. He speaks either as a frenzied enthusiast, or as the inspired representative of that mysterious power whose potencies are as equal to the conversion of a world as to its creation. Without distinction or standing among their own countrymen, without resources of affluence or learn-

ing, without inducements of a tangible kind to win converts, confronted by the bitter, deadly hostility of an ancient and honored creed, antagonized by all the mythologies, temples, worships of earth and by the consolidated energy of all the vices, passions, oppressions and hellish malignancy in man's heart, how ridiculous or how sublime the thought that the kingdom of this crucified Nazarene should conquer the earth!" From this last great command of the Christ has sprung the world wide missionary movement, "that singular undertaking which," as Mary Guinness says, "is either the most astoundingly impudent and foolish and hopeless thing in the world, or else the sublimest service which human hands can touch." Our deep conviction as to the ultimate victory of the kingdom of God rests in the last analysis upon the clear and constant self-consciousness of Jesus and upon his unmistakable teachings in this respect. As an heaven-sent teacher, trustworthy and reliable, he puts the question forever beyond dispute. For the devoted disciple of the Master no other evidence is necessary.

There are, however, other considerations that may here be briefly mentioned why we may rationally believe in the ultimate and complete victory of the kingdom of God which Christ came to establish. The consistent voice of prophecy both in the Old and the New Testament lead us to look forward to and expect it. The woman's seed is to bruise

the serpent's head with a deadly wound. In Abraham's seed all nations of the earth are to be blessed. The sceptre shall never depart from Judah, nor shall enemies succeed against David's son. Concerning him high heaven has recorded a decree, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "All nations shall serve him, and of his kingdom there shall be no end," "And thou sawest 'till that a stone was cut out without hands, * * * * and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all of these kingdoms and it shall stand forever." This is the unanimous testimony of Old Testament historians, psalmists and prophets. The teaching of Jesus is clear and convincing. The inspired apostles and preachers of the New Testament testify to the same great fact. As Peter said at Pentecost, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this same Jesus whom ye crucified." Or as Stephen witnessed, "Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Or, as Paul wrote

to the Corinthians, "For he must reign 'till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." Or as he wrote to the Ephesians of God's purpose "to sum up all things in Christ," or to the Colossians, "All things have been created through him and unto him," or to the Philippians, "Wherefore also God highly exalted him and gave unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow * * * * , and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Or, as the anonymous writer of Hebrews puts it, "His Son, whom he appointed heir of all things." The book of Revelation, whatever interpretation may be put upon its several parts, is a graphic and symbolical picture of the certain overthrow of evil and of the triumph of the Lamb. The various prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Christ, however they may be interpreted, are a guarantee of his victory. The disciples may have misconceived both the time and the manner of that event, but they were not allowed to miss the supreme fact that he would come again, and come in triumph. The Lord's Prayer is itself a prophecy that will certainly be fulfilled. The millions, who have prayed and will continue to pray, under their Lord's direction, "Thy name be hallowed. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done as in heaven, so on earth" will not, cannot, must not, be disappointed.

Another consideration, in addition to the teaching of Jesus and the spirit of prophecy, to strengthen our assurance of the ultimate victory of Christ and his kingdom, may very properly be drawn from his unique personality and his relationship to the Father and to the world. If Jesus Christ is God's own Son, only-begotten and well-beloved, then sonship implies heirship. If you do not question Christ's unique and unapproachable sonship, then you cannot doubt the outcome of his kingdom. This is Christ's world. The devil has only a squatter's rights here. Christ created the world, sustains the world, has redeemed the world, and shall ultimately rule the world. Again, the world's deepest need, and the adaptability of the Gospel to meet that need, i. e. the scientific principle of "the survival of the fittest," makes certain the triumph of Christ. The deepest need of the whole world, both individual and social, is a clear and convincing knowledge of the true God and the union of human life with the divine through the real forgiveness of sin and reconciliation; such a fellowship with God as shall insure the largest life, making men and women like God in holiness, love, and blessedness. That religion, and only that, which can best meet this need, will by the scientific and evolutionary principle of the survival of the best be ultimately victorious, and remain so. Christianity has abundantly proved itself to be capable of being the supreme and uni-

versal religion, taking men and women of all sorts and conditions as it has found them anywhere and everywhere, and proving itself to be in them and through them God's greatest blessing to men. It reveals the perfect and true God, a God of ideal, moral excellence, a holy and loving Heavenly Father, who has provided in his Son for such a full revelation of himself, and through the Holy Spirit for such a fellowship with himself that men shall gradually be transformed into his own likeness. Nothing can be higher than the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which he revealed. The fittest will conquer.

Not only because of the clear consciousness and unmistakable teaching of Jesus, because of the unanimous voice of both Old and New Testament prophecy, because of his unique personality and because of the certain survival of the best; but also because of Christianity's past influence and growth and its present growth and power we may confidently infer its victorious future. I need not here recall its small and obscure beginnings, its early conquests, its vitalizing power. That story is now more or less familiar to us all. But is it growing in extent and power today; or, as some skeptics would have us believe, has it about played its part in the evolutionary history of the world, and is it about ready to pass off the scene of action to make way for something better? I do wish that every

one who ever has had or has any such fear might carefully read such an illuminating book as Gülick's "The Growth of the Kingdom of God." In this really remarkable book Mr. Gülick asks most fearlessly and intelligently, and answers in a most clear and convincing manner, four questions about the present growth of the kingdom of God. (1) Is there an increasing *number* of those who claim, whether truly or not, to believe in the teachings of Jesus? (2) Is there an increasing *understanding* of the contents of those teachings by those who claim to believe them? (3) Is there an increasing *obedience* to the spirit taught by Christ? (4) Is there an increasing *influence* of those teachings and of that spirit, even on those who make no claim to believe or follow them? To all four of these questions he finds that he is compelled by the abundant facts furnished from the best of sources to give an affirmative answer, and to say that as a result of long and careful study "he most firmly believes that there has been steady growth of the kingdom of God upon earth, and that the will of God is being carried out more fully by this than by any previous generation." Nor does he shut his eyes to the great evils of our times, or fail to see the difficulties within and without the kingdom. As to numbers note this: in 1000 A. D. there were fifty million nominal Christians; in 1700 there were one hundred and fifty millions; in 1800 there were two hundred millions;

in 1900 there were five hundred millions. During the last one hundred years there have been over twice as many nominal adherents won to Christ as during all the previous centuries combined. At the time when Jesus lived polytheism ruled the world; today there is not a first-class, polytheistic, self-governing nation upon the globe; one-third of the world's population is today nominally Christian, and that one-third rules two-thirds of the whole. Even in the United States, where the total population has increased twelve times in one hundred years, the membership in the various churches has increased thirty-nine times. Moreover it is the purer type of Christianity that is winning. Four hundred years ago the Roman Catholic church ruled over eighty million people, and Protestants over none; today Catholics rule over two hundred and fifty millions, while Protestants rule over nine hundred million. Catholic French was one hundred years ago the first language in the world, and Protestant English was fifth; now Protestant English is first, spoken by twice as many people as French, and is rapidly becoming the diplomatic language of the world, while Protestant German is second and French fourth. Equally clear is it that there has been tremendous progress in the comprehension of the teachings of Jesus: while the mere mention of names of manifold Christian organizations and movements, which have sprung up within the last century, make it cer-

tain that there has been great progress in the practice of the principles Christ presented. The growing sacredness of human life, the position of woman, the awakening of the public conscience, the humanitarianism of the day, the purification of literature, the demand for a higher life on the part of Christians from the world, the growth in arbitration sentiment; these, and a score of other things, indicate the growing influence of Christian ideas upon the outside world.

From all of these lines of thought it is increasingly evident that the future of the kingdom of God is secure. What sort of persons, then, ought we to be? Has this kingdom begun in me? Is it growing in me? What am I doing to help it grow in myself, and in others, and in its victorious conquest of the world? Have I been patient and prayerful enough in view of the facts? Am I giving to it the confident and enthusiastic co-operation it deserves? Only what we do for Him and for His kingdom will abide. To look back upon its onward, inevitable, and victorious march, and to be humbly conscious of having had some honest share in His triumph, will be heaven. To have seen His Kingdom conquer, and to have had no part in it, will be a bitter portion of the soul's doom. Are you choosing the better part?

Change Your Mind!

Isaiah 55:7.—"*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*"

Ezekiel 33:11.—"*Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*"

Matt. 4:17.—"*From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'*"

Acts 17:30.—"*The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent.*"

THE portions of Scripture just read are only a few of the many passages, in both the Old and the New Testaments, which insist upon the duty and doctrine of repentance. Repentance was a familiar message in biblical times; its meaning ought to be specially clear to-day. Should I ask, however, an average audience for a definition of Scriptural repentance, we should be surprised at the variety of the answers given. Many have an inadequate idea of its scope; many

confound other things with it. Let us ask ourselves what it is, and what it is not. The word in the original which is translated "Repent," means literally, "To think differently after, an afterthinking, a change of mind resulting in a change of conduct." Dr. John A. Broadus, the great American New Testament Greek scholar, defined repentance as "a change of mind, thought and purpose as regards sin, and the service of God; a change naturally accompanied by deep sorrow for past sin, and naturally leading to a change of outward life." In the Old Testament the corresponding injunction is, "Turn ye, turn ye, or return." In the Latin version we have the translation "exercise penitence," which with ritualists soon came to mean "do penance." But thought is the source of deep and true feeling, and thought and feeling lead to action. The change of mind, thought, or purpose is, therefore, the primary idea; while feeling, or grief for sin, is secondary: not grief for sin first and change of mind second, as some would have us suppose. And so, when Old Testament prophet and New Testament preacher united in echoing the divine injunction, "Repent ye! Repent ye!" they were saying in nineteenth century English, "Change your mind! Change your mind!" Isaiah said it. Ezekiel said it. John the Baptist said it. Christ said it. The twelve said it. Peter said it. Paul said it. "Change your mind! Change your mind! For

the kingdom of God is at hand." And to-day, as a humble follower of a long line of faithful preachers of the cross, each ministering to his own generation, each proclaiming, as God's messenger, the blessed gospel of salvation, I too, in God's name, call upon you to "change your mind."

Change your mind about God. Some people think of God as a great, burly, arbitrary, despotic Being; a terrible Judge before whom we must appear; a hard Task-master trying to drive on to slavish toil a helpless and hopeless race; an awful Ogre; a Monster, lawless and loveless. But this is not the God of the Bible, nor the God of the universe. God is not a monster, but a benevolent Creator, and a loving Heavenly Father. He made man, his masterpiece, in His own image and likeness; and to rule. He created a beautiful world of harmony and peace for man's home; and when man, by his own voluntary sin, defiled his heart and home, and destroyed the bliss of earth, God did not leave him alone in his misery and woe, but came to teach him the blight of sin, and to point him forward in hope to the time of victory over evil through the woman's seed. In the fulness of time God's own Son, born of a woman, came into the world as a man, to win a victory for man; and to bring man back to fellowship with God, and into the relationship of sonship with a Heavenly Father. You must change your mind about God. God loves you. God desires you to

be His son, to see in Him your Father. Yes! He loves YOU, every one of you, the very vilest and weakest, the most ungrateful and selfish of you. He has always loved you. He desires to save every one of you. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." His supreme desire for you is that you may choose his Son as your Savior, Friend and Brother; and through Him learn how to be a child of God. For, "as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." Change your mind about God now! He is your Friend. He desires your very highest welfare. He wants many sons, and wants to bring those sons to glory. He wants you to be his child. He yearns to teach you through the Spirit to cry "Abba, Father."

Then, too, you must change your mind not only about God, but also about man, about yourself. You are not a mere body; not all physical; not "a mass of matter formed by the chance accumulation of unreasoning atoms"; not simply an animal. You are something more than the brutes. You are a person. You have mental possibilities. You have a spiritual capacity. Like the temple of old, you have the outer court, the body; the inner court, the mind; and the holy of holies, the spirit. And in some of you this spiritual part of

your nature, like the deserted Temple in the time of Pompey, is dark and tenantless. Oh, that you would open the door now and let the Savior in! Man is, above all things, a spiritual being, with a capacity for God; and it is impossible for him ever to find permanent peace or rest away from God. No spiritual being can ever be fully satisfied with material things; nor find his highest or fullest development in the realm of the visible. Come! Change your mind about yourself! You have divine possibilities. Your spiritual capacity is the best and most enduring thing about you. Let God into your soul and you will, indeed, begin to live.

You must change your mind also about sin. In the olden time, the Tempter led our first parents to believe that sin was a good thing, was an advantage. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." And it has been thus ever since. People only sin at first under the false impression that they are going to gain something by it. Later on people sin from force of habit and strength of appetite. But at first we are led to suppose that this or that sin, this or that indulgence, will be the road to advantage. But the call of God, the message of Scripture, the verdict

of history, observation and experience, the voice of wisdom, all cry out in stentorian tones, "Change your mind! Change your mind!" Sin is never a real gain. There is no permanent advantage in wrong-doing. Sin is always, as the Hebrew word describes it, a missing of the mark, a loss, a mistake. Be wise in time and forsake sin!

Again, you must change your mind about righteousness. You have thought that the path of self-indulgence and sin was the path of joy and peace; and that the path of right-doing was narrow and disappointing. You must change your mind! Righteousness does not mean compression, but expression; not slavery but highest liberty; not a burden but a boon; not a fast, nor a funeral, but a feast of good things. Satan is inducing you to live on sawdust, to feed on the pods that the swine eat. But God says, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Sin always cramps and warps, dwarfs and destroys; but righteousness enlarges and develops, builds up, makes for manhood and womanhood. To be a Christian means to "have life and to have it more abundantly." Listen! There is not in Christianity a single duty or doctrine, that will dim or destroy one single honest delight of the human heart. Not one! It aims a deadly blow only at sin and selfishness. It aims to destroy

that which is already destroying you. Change your mind about righteousness!

Once more; you must change your mind about Christ, the supreme figure of human history. You must change your mind about Christ. He is not a mere historical personage: one who lived and died nineteen hundred years ago, a martyr to an unfortunate series of circumstances. He is not merely the ideal man, the best man that ever lived. He is God as well as man, the God-man Christ Jesus, who, in order to provide a salvation for every member of the human race, lived and died and rose again, and lives to-day at God's right hand, where He shall sit till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. He tasted death for every man; He was made perfectly fitted through suffering to be the captain of our salvation, yours and mine; He is not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but is able to sympathize with and help us; having made a propitiation for our sins, He is ever living to make intercession for us, and so is able to save to the uttermost all those who come to God through Him. Change your mind about Christ, and accept Him now as your Savior!

This is fundamentally the call to repentance. Change your mind about God, and see in Him a Friend and Father! Change your mind about yourself, and recognize your spiritual nature and possibilities! Change your mind about sin, and see

in it that which only warps and destroys! Change your mind about righteousness, and see in it fulness of life! Change your mind about Christ, and see in Him your Savior! To bring you to this change of mind God has been using, is using, and will continue to use—every possible resource within his power, without interfering with your freedom of choice. He wishes that none should perish but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. Christ's life and death and resurrection prove God's love for you in the past; the pleading of the Holy Spirit, the presentation of truth to your soul, the presence of opportunities for you to accept Christ and be saved now, are evidence abundant of God's present love for and interest in YOU. Change your mind and turn to Him!

Repentance, then, is a change of mind, leading to a change of conduct. It is man's act, by virtue of which he puts himself in a position to accept salvation from God through Christ. It is an absolutely necessary prerequisite to salvation; not a means, or in any way meritorious, but a necessary condition of forgiveness.

If this change of mind is thorough and genuine, it will be accompanied with a change of feeling and lead to and result in a change of conduct. For true repentance involves and includes five things: (1) Conviction of sin; (2) Contrition for sin; (3) Confession of sin; (4) Turning from sin;

(5) Surrender to Christ. How much conviction must there be? Dr. Strong definitely answers, "Enough to induce the sinner promptly and persistently to turn from sin to Christ." Less than this is not enough. More than this is not necessary. There must be also sorrow for sin, and confession of sin; or there will be no turning away from sin, and turning to and accepting of Christ. Nor will confession of sin avail, unless there is a turning away from sin. Pharaoh said, "I have sinned," but went on doing the same thing the next day. Nor will turning away from sin avail, unless there is some one who can save from sin. There must be a surrender to Christ. Thus each step involves the others; and if repentance is genuine, all will be included. True repentance never exists without faith, and true faith always is accompanied by repentance.

Repentance, then, is not to be confounded with fear. In a storm on the sea certain godless men stopped their swearing, gambling and drinking, fell upon their knees and began to pray. You think it an example of repentance? Let us wait and we can determine. When the terrible storm was over, and a little time had passed, the game was soon restarted; oaths, at first moderate and less violent, soon became blasphemous; and carousing continued. You say, repentance? No! Not repentance, but fear.

Nor is repentance to be confounded with feel-

ing. It is easy to make people cry, but not so easy to lead them to repentance. Nor is repentance to be identified with remorse. Judas had remorse, and went out and hanged himself.

"Repentance and remorse are not the same;
That is a heavenly, this an earthly flame:
One springs from love, and is a welcome guest;
And one an iron tyrant o'er the breast.
Repentance weeps before the crucified;
Remorse is nothing more than wounded pride;
Remorse thro' horror into hell is driven,
While true repentance always leads to heaven."

Nor is repentance to be confounded with "saying one's prayers"; or "doing penance"; or "making new resolutions"; or "breaking off some bad habit"; or "going to prayer meeting"; or "giving to charity." Repentance is a radical change of mind, thought, and purpose with reference to the great fundamentals; God, man, sin, righteousness and Christ: a change of mind accompanied by a change of feeling, and leading to a change of conduct and character; involving conviction, contrition and confession of sin; a turning away from sin, and acceptance of Christ. Thus it is intellectual, emotional and volitional; and involves a man's whole self.

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before;
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

In Dr. Stalker's "Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ" there is a beautiful description given of "The Three Groups around the Cross." One group, sitting upon the ground near the foot of the cross, is made up of four Roman soldiers, the quaternion whose business it was to carry out the decrees of the court. They have done their work well. Having led Christ away to Golgotha, having laid and fastened the cross-piece upon the upright, they nail the Savior to the cross. Then they lift up the cross and its burden; and drop it into the hole which has been dug for it, making the cross fast with stakes and ropes. That work done, the soldiers sit down to divide the spoils; for they are his legal heirs, it being the custom that the garments of the condemned shall be the perquisites of the executioners. How little he had of material things! A turban, an outer garment, a girdle and a pair of sandals! Four articles for four soldiers. But there is a fifth article—the closely fitting, finely woven tunic. What shall they do with that? To rend it into four pieces would be to destroy its value. And so, in Roman fashion, they sit and cast lots to determine whose it shall be. What a picture of absolute indifference to the significant events of the hour! Yonder, within a few feet of them, is dying the Savior of the world; "a God upon a cross"; one who is tasting death even for the soldiers who crucify him; the supreme figure of all history. What a picture of

those careless ones, who while away life's golden opportunities, playing at games of chance, and making light of the grandest themes of human or divine thought! What a picture of all those who are indifferent to Christ and righteousness! But a time will come when conscience will awake and memory will not be quieted. Then how mournful will be their souls' sad wail.

> "I thought of myself, I lived for myself,
> For myself and none beside;
> Just as if Jesus had never lived,
> As though He had never died."

Here is apathy indeed.

A second group about the cross, a much larger one, is composed of the members of the Sanhedrin; who, contrary to custom, are not content to have condemned the Nazarene, but have followed to the place of execution to gloat over the sufferings of the crucified. Along with the priests and scribes is a mixed crowd of people from Jerusalem, who are being stirred up by the leaders to hurl revilings at Christ. "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself: if thou art the Son of God, come down from the Cross." "He saved others; himself he cannot save. He is the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him." "He trusted on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him; for he said, I am the Son of

God." Thus did they there mock at Him, and scorn Him. What a picture that, of all those who are hostile to truth and Christ: whose desire is to tear down and destroy: who throw the weight of life and influence on the side of evil! Here is "not apathy but antipathy."

There was, however, another group about that cross that day. Like the first group, it was a small one; made up of some women, the three Marys; and John, the beloved disciple. Oh, how they love yonder man on the cross! The nails that pierce his hands have already pierced their hearts. They walked with him, talked with him, ministered to him; and now they are suffering with him, dying with him. Oh, how they love him! And yonder Christ on the cross, exhausted with hours of continuous agony, pained at the indifference of soldiers and the hate of scorners, must often have lifted his bloodshot eyes away from the indifferent and hostile, and lovingly looked upon these dear ones. How their presence must have soothed and rested his weary soul! How their love must have sustained his human spirit! Ah! here was "neither apathy, nor antipathy. Here was sympathy."

In one of these groups you will find yourself to-day. Jesus Christ divides the world. He is the touchstone of human character. What is your relationship to Him? Is it one of indifference, one of hostility, or one of loyal love? If you are

honest with yourself, and with Him, you can and will realize your true condition.

It would be cruel to paint such a picture as this, were these groups already permanently fixed and unchangeable. But, blessed be God! they are in the forming. No great gulf is yet between. If you are not where you ought to be, and where you wish to remain, you can change your position. On that great day of crucifixion there was one man who did so. Since that day thousands have done so. The gospel of Matthew tells us, "And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach." That is, they both belonged to the second group, the group of scorners. But one of those thieves changed his position. I don't know whether he was in the judgment hall and heard Christ's answers to Pilate. I don't know whether he was on the porch, and saw the scourged and scorned Jesus; and heard Pilate, as he thrust the bleeding Christ before the throng, cry out, "Ecce Homo!" "Behold the Man!" I don't know whether he heard Christ speak to the weeping daughters of Jerusalem. But I feel sure that as the soldiers drove the nails through the palms and feet of the Savior, this thief heard Him pray for them, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." This thief must have noticed Jesus' look toward his widowed, desolate mother, and heard Him say, forgetful of Himself and thoughtful of

her future, "Behold your son!" and to John, "Behold your mother!" What else he heard and saw, I know not. But as he thought, and listened, and looked at that Figure on the central cross, he "changed his mind"; his feelings became different; he changed his conduct. He left the company of the scornful; he joined the company of the sympathetic. He repented. And then he cried, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." "And Jesus said unto him, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'"

Two Kinds of Christians

1 Corinthians 3: 1-4.—"*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not able to bear it; nay, not even now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men?*"

Hebrews 5: 10-14.—"*Named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, of which we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men; even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.*"

BOTH Scripture and observation tell us that there are two kinds of Christians. One kind are carnal; one kind are spiritual: one babes; one full-grown: one children in Christian life and experience; one adults: one influenced too much by the world; the other ruled by the Spirit.

There were not in New Testament days, nor in the New Testament churches, the two kinds of Christians in which some would have us believe; those who were "saints" in the sense of "sinlessly perfect ones," and those who were just ordinary, everyday Christians. Such a distinction exists neither in Scripture nor in fact; did not exist in the first century of the Christian Church; does not exist now. By the uniform usage of the New Testament all Christians are called "saints," "holy brethren," "partakers of a heavenly calling." The "saint," or "sanctified" person of the Old Testament, be he prophet, priest or king, was one who had been anointed with the sacred, flowing oil, and was set apart for sacred service. He was not a perfect person; he was not a sinless one. Even the High Priest, the most sanctified of all sanctified persons, must make an atonement first for his own sins, before he is fitted to make atonement for the sins of the people. The sanctified day was a day set apart for sacred use, and the sanctified place a place set apart for divine service. So all New Testament Christians are called "set-apart ones," "sanctified ones"; are "saved to serve," and called apart to live for God. "Ye are not your own. For ye were bought with a price: glorify God, therefore, in your body." "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he

died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." All Christians are declared to be saints in Christ, and are destined to realized sainthood in proportion as they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of His will; and strive to attain to the fulness of the stature of manhood and womanhood through Christ. All in Christ are saints, but there are two kinds of saints. There were two kinds in the apostolic churches; there are two kinds in the churches now. The passages of Scripture in our study to-day clearly distinguish between two kinds of Christians; and suggest the characteristics of each.* There are carnal Christians, babes in Christ; and there are spiritual Christians, mature and well-developed. Nor is this distinction one of age in the Christian life. Some, who have only been Christians for a short time, manifest many evidences of maturity; while some, who by reason of time ought by now to be teachers, are still babes, needing milk and unable to digest solid food. Let us note four characteristics of the carnal Christian:

1. He is a babe. Now if one is only a few weeks or months old in the Christian life, we may expect such an one to be a babe, but we should not expect him to remain always a babe. A babe a

* For helpful suggestions here I am indebted to F. B. Meyer's "Way into the Holiest."

few weeks or months old is a delight indeed, but a babe fifteen or twenty years old is a monstrosity. If so in the physical world, why should it not be considered so in the spiritual world? Oh, you say, must we not become as little children before we can enter into the kingdom of God? And must we not retain the childlike spirit, if we are to make any true progress in spiritual life? Yes, most assuredly. There are features of the child-life that are always desirable; its faith, its teachableness, its simplicity, etc. But there are other features of the child-life, not to be cultivated; as its helplessness and lack of purpose. The babe is so helpless, weak and dependent. Its bones and muscles, its legs and back are not strong. And then, too, the babe does not live with any fixed purpose in view, nor direct its energies to any given goal. It drops one toy only to pick up another, it builds one castle in Spain, only to desert it, before it is half done, to plan another. So these carnal Christians are babes in helplessness, and in lack of lofty purpose. They have weak limbs and frail spines; they are not consumed with noble resolves, or driven on with a Christlike enthusiasm. They are babes.

2. They live upon milk. Now, milk is food partially digested by somebody else. The mother partially digests the food for the child, because the child has not the digestive and assimilative strength to do so for himself. So these carnal

Christians live upon milk, food partially digested by somebody else. They attach themselves to this or that preacher or teacher, and give as their basis of belief, "So and so says so." They are not able to give a good reason for the hope that is in them. They have no life in themselves. They do not search the Scriptures for themselves. They are like Jeremiah's broken cisterns that can hold no water. They are in no sense "a well of water springing up unto eternal life." Broken cisterns, empty and dry, they sit before the pastor on Lord's-day morning. He dumps into the cisterns a bucket full, a barrel full, a hogshead full of living water, howsoever much he may have on hand, and, poor man, before twenty-four hours have passed, with afternoon gaieties and evening larks, almost all of the living water has leaked away; and by midweek prayer-meeting the cisterns are entirely dry. Oh, that they would come personally to the Christ and drink of Him, that out of them might flow rivers of living water!

3. These carnal Christians are sectarian. "For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men? (i. e., as previous verse shows, carnal and walk after manner of men?)" Don't misunderstand me! I believe in denominational loyalty. The more mature a Christian becomes, the more thoroughly will he believe the peculiar phases of truth emphasized by his own denomination, provided they are

worthy of belief. He will be a better Presbyterian, a better Methodist, a better Baptist, etc. I am not waging war against denominations, but against the narrow, sectarian spirit. How may we know whether we are sectarian? Which stands first in your heart? Your church or Jesus Christ? Is the Christian life for you synonymous with membership in your church? Or does the Christian life mean to you, above and beyond all things else, living fellowship with a personal Redeemer and Friend? He who puts his church first is sectarian. So is it with these carnal Christians. The Christian life to such is largely a matter of times and places, of church and ceremony, of creed and ritual. It is largely external. Little is made of personal union with Christ, and of a Christ-like life through faith in and fellowship with Jesus. Much is made of form and external proprieties. Life is always large and free, the spirit means liberty. Sectarian form is often small and dwarfing. Every denomination can furnish examples similar to the following incident. I once heard of a man who, from the steps of a platform, was attempting to address a large audience. He was so small that the audience requested him to go up higher upon the steps that they might see him. He did so. Again the cry came from the audience, "Higher! higher! go up higher." And the little man replied, "I can't. I am as high as I can get. I'm a Baptist." High as you can get

because you are a Baptist! May God have mercy upon your little shriveled-up soul. I'm a Baptist too, by conviction and by confession, as well as by birth and breeding. But is there nothing higher possible than to be a Baptist, or a Methodist; a Presbyterian, or a Disciple? Oh! to be a Christian is infinitely higher than to be any or all of these. Put loyalty to Christ first; then loyalty to the church.

4. Carnal Christians are unable "to discern good and evil." They have not grown in grace and in the knowledge of His will. They have not learned rightly to test things, and to approve only those things that are excellent. Their senses have not been "exercised by reason of use to discern good and evil." They are ever and anon doing things that are not worth while, that do not edify, or build up. They have no clear conception as to what is Christ-like, and what is not Christ-like. They are swayed by custom and circumstance rather than by conviction and character. These, then, are four characteristics of carnal Christians. They are babes; they live on milk; they are sectarian; they are unable to discern good and evil. In proportion as we approximate this condition, we approach the state of the carnal.

But how can we get away from the babyhood state and come into the mature life? Not by any short-cut method, nor by any "French taught in two weeks" plan. Nor shall we get it in any

miraculous manner, as a direct and immediate answer to prayer. As well might the baby-boy pray, "O God! make me a full-grown, great, big man right off to-day." Such a prayer would not be in accord with God's will, nor in conformity with God's method of working. The baby-boy must fulfill certain well-known conditions, and in time he will become a "great, big man." He must eat, he must sleep, he must exercise and work, he must live in a healthy environment. So the baby Christian must fulfill certain well-known conditions, if he would become an adult Christian; and these conditions are similar to those of physical growth. He must accept the completed work of Christ, must step out on the promises, and live a life of implicit trust in Him. This is his rest. He must commune with God in prayer, learn of Him through the Scriptures, work for Him in his daily life. This is his food and exercise. He must also surround himself with helpful influences, and, through membership in the church and Christian societies, through attendance upon the house of God and mid-week prayer-meeting, through Christian friendship and fellowship, he must find that healthy environment which is necessary to the development of a strong Christian life. These plain conditions fulfilled by even the youngest and weakest of Christ's babes, will, with the factor of time added, most surely result in the longed-for Christian maturity.

And should you ask, "What are some of the striking features of the mature Christian life?" the answer is evident.

1. It is a life of personal possession. It is a life of conscious and constant communion with Christ. Creed and ritual, church and ceremony are precious, because they are a visible, external representation of that which is a personal, spiritual experience. The mature Christian feels a thrill in his soul as he cries out in the personal experience of David, "The Lord is my Shepherd." He loves to sing that blessed song of personal appropriation and conscious possession, "My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine." That which is not personal is not powerful. Had S. F. Smith written "Our Country, 'Tis of Thee," we should never have adopted it as our national song. But when he had the genius to write "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," he struck a responsive chord in every patriot's heart. And when the writer of the sweet song wrote "My Jesus," he struck a harp-string in the mature Christian's life. This sense of personal possession and fact of conscious communion carry with them Christian assurance. The mature Christian has no doubt of his salvation. He doesn't say, "I hope I may be saved." "I trust I am a Christian." He knows it. "I know Thou art mine." "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." "I know him whom I have believed, and I am per-

suaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2. It is a life of personal purity. The adult Christian, with his sense of personal possession and conscious communion, recognizes the absolute necessity of personal purity in his walk. He knows that only those are really blessed who are pure in heart. They alone see God. He regards himself as a son of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, a child of a Heavenly Father. "Like as he which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, 'Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.'" He reckons himself to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God. He knows he comes far short of actual personal righteousness, but the desire and design of his life are to "do always those things which please Him." He feels that he must be about his Father's business. Jesus has said to him, "You are the salt of the earth"; "You are the light of the world"; "You shall witness of these things." The mature Christian recognizes that the world does not see the invisible, though living, Christ; except as it sees Him in the Christian. Not "the gospel according to Matthew," nor "the gospel according to Mark"; not "the gospel according to Luke," nor "the gospel according to John"; but the fifth gospel, "the gospel according to you and me," is the gospel that the world reads. What sort of a gospel is "the gospel according to

you and according to me"? Is it an argument for Christ and Christianity? Or is it an argument against Christ? Does the sensitive soul incline more strongly to become a follower of Him, because that soul knows your life and mine? Or do we discourage people by our lives from starting in the Christian life? Are we His representatives? If so, do we re-present Christ in our lives? Or do we mis-represent Him? The importance of these things the mature Christian realizes, and he aims to make his life, through Christ's help, a life of personal purity.

3. It is a life of persistent purpose. One of the undesirable features of the baby-life is its indecision, its lack of definite purpose. The child is carried here and there by every freak of fancy, unstable in all his ways. He lives for the immediate present and the gratification of each passing whim. On the contrary a prominent feature of all healthy maturity is the presence of some strong motive power and noble purpose, which give direction to one's endeavors and act as a compass in life. This persistent purpose gives steadiness and poise to one's living; and lifts one above the dreary, dry drudgery of the commonplace. For the Christian there can be but one highest motive, "For me to live is Christ." To live for Him, to win fruit for Him, to become constantly more and more like Him. One resolve for the mature Christian must always take prece-

dence of all others. "That I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith: that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead." "One thing I do . . . I press on toward the goal, unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect (mature), be thus minded."

4. It is a life of perpetual progress. At first one might make the mistake of supposing that maturity of life means a cessation of growth. But it is not thus in the normal life. There will be a constant deepening and sweetening and broadening of the soul's experience. The path of the righteous will grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. The more one develops into maturity of life, the more one realizes his own short-comings, and the loftiness of the heights of holiness. No really mature person ever thinks that he has already attained the goal. The more one really knows, the less he thinks he knows; and the more he sees there is to learn. So it is in all departments of life. So it is in the Christian's experience. Paul, in the maturity of a rich Christian life, said, in deepest humility and without any consciousness of spiritual superi-

ority, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind (the failures of the past, the attainments of the past), and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal . . . Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

5. It is a life of permanent power. One great reason why our churches do not have more power with God and man is because there is in them such a large body of carnal Christians; Christians who are babes in Christ; in whom the world rules; who upon the foundation, Christ, are building hay, wood and stubble; who, by the grace of God, shall be saved, yet so as by fire; whose works shall be burned and destroyed, and they themselves shall suffer loss; whose lives count for little or nothing so far as permanent power is concerned. The primary need of Christ, of the church, of the world to-day, is not for more professing Christians, but for a better type and grade of Christians; not for more disciples, but for more in the disciples; nor for more branches on the vine, but for more on each branch; not for more foliage, but for more fruit. But we must not pray directly for more fruit, but first for more

love and more life. God will not hang rich, red, ripe, luscious fruit upon rotten boughs; or grow good grapes upon impoverished vines. If it is fruit that is desired, let us then remember that "fruits come from roots." Only maturity of life means much fruit. For the mature life can no more fail of fruit, and be lacking in permanent power, than the sun can cease to shine.

Let us then flee away from babyhood with its weakness and feeding upon milk, with its sectarianism and lack of discernment. Let us, by using the means of grace, grow in grace and in the knowledge of His will, and strive to attain to the fulness of the stature of manhood and womanhood in Christ. Then we shall come into a life of personal possession, personal purity, persistent purpose, perpetual progress and permanent power. Then will life be, indeed, an inspiration and a joy; and at its earthly close we may say with grand old Paul:

"I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the course,
I have kept the faith;
Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness."

"Life's race well run;
Life's work well done;
Life's crown well won."

Individual Responsibility for Souls

Ezekiel 33 : 7.—"*So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.*"

Matt. 5 : 13.—"*Ye are the salt of the earth.*"

Matt. 5 : 14.—"*Ye are the light of the world.*"

Acts 1 : 8.—"*And ye shall be my witnesses.*"

Revelation 22 : 17.—"*And he that heareth, let him say 'Come.'*"

IN the fourteenth chapter of Romans and in the seventh verse we find these significant words, "For none of us liveth unto himself and none dieth unto himself." This striking sentence was written by Paul over eighteen hundred years ago. If it meant anything then, what must it mean now? Eighteen hundred years ago the world seemed large. Men lived far apart from one another, in isolated communities, mutually ignorant and mutually suspicious of each other. But to-day isolation is no longer possible. The world has become small. Modern science has made the whole round world one small neigh-

borhood. As Dr. Josiah Strong has put it: "Steam and electricity have mightily compressed the earth: the elbows of the nations touch." If, in that far-off time of isolation and separation, Paul could write, "None of us liveth unto himself and no one dieth unto himself," what added weight of truth is found in his words to-day! The intricate intimacies of modern life are remarkable for their closeness. We have all been shoved together into nearness of relationship; and these relationships bring responsibility. No longer is it possible for individual or nation to live alone, apart from relationship and without responsibility. We are born into relationships, we live in the midst of them, we die in the midst of them. We are related to God, to self, to each other; and our relationships determine for us our duties. The effect of relationship and influence may be illustrated from the physical world. In the world of matter the molecules of matter all touch one upon another. No molecule exists apart from its fellows. And so when I move my hand through space, I disturb all the molecules of air which are within my immediate reach, which molecules disturb other molecules, until the wave of disturbance goes round the world. Drop a pebble upon the surface of a lake, and from that small point of disturbance a series of concentric circles will be formed, larger and larger, larger and larger, until they cover the surface of the whole

water. So in the world of persons, we are related one to another. No one stands absolutely alone. No one lives who is entirely without influence. Every one is helping or hindering others every day of his life. There is no flower that blooms even on the dizziest mountain peak or in the deepest dell, but that the air is sweeter because of it. There is no cesspool anywhere, however hidden, but that the air is fouler because of it. Nor has any one of us to-day had a thought or desire heavenward, but that the world is better for it. Nor has any one of us had a thought or desire of evil to-day, but that this world of ours has swung a little nearer the pit. But it is not of general relationships, nor of responsibilities in general that I wish now to speak; but of a certain specific relationship, and of a particular responsibility. We enjoy listening to general truths. We do not like specific applications. David was entertained by Nathan's beautiful parable of the Ewe Lamb. He was only convicted of sin, when Nathan made the general specific, and said, "Thou art the man." Let none of us, then, try to hide behind a general truth, but let us be individually honest with a personal duty. God's first question to man in the Garden was, "Where art thou?" This question, I presume, the majority of my audience have already answered. But there was a second question which soon followed, "Where is thy brother?" How are you answer-

ing this question? In the spirit of Cain, are you trying to cast off all responsibility by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Or in the spirit of the second Adam, the Christ of Nazareth, are you going out to seek and to save the lost? Whom are you following, Cain or Christ? "Where is thy brother?" This, then, is the theme for our present consideration, individual responsibility for the salvation of souls.

1. There are not two moral standards laid down in Scripture; one for the preacher or evangelist, and another for the ordinary Christian. The preacher or evangelist is only the ordinary Christian doing, with all of his time and energy, that which every Christian is bound by duty and love to do. All of us have been saved to serve. All of us are sons of God, and are called to work in our Father's vineyard. All are commissioned and sent forth to do the Father's business. There is not a verse or passage in all Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, properly translated and interpreted in the light of its context, and in full view of the gradualness and progressiveness of revelation; not a single verse or passage which teaches, or even intimates, that the preacher, evangelist or trained worker ought to feel the burden for souls, while the ordinary Christian and layman ought not to feel it. These two moral standards are not Scriptural. All Scripture in its trend and in its teaching is opposed to such

a double standard of duty. One marked difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, as foretold in Old Testament prophecy and fulfilled in New Testament days (as the eighth chapter of Hebrews makes clear), lies just in this fact that in the days of the Old Covenant God's Spirit was poured out only upon a few persons in a generation, upon prophet, priest or king; while in the days of the New Covenant the Spirit is poured out upon all the members of the kingdom. Recall for a moment that wonderful prophecy of Joel. A severe locust plague had been followed by a drought. The people in their distress turned to God with fasting and prayer. In answer to prayer God removed the locusts, and, through the pouring out of rain, the drought. And then God gave a wonderful promise. "And it shall come to pass afterward (using that indefinite phrasing of which the prophets were fond) that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." Eight hundred years and more rolled around. Jesus lived, died, rose again, ascended to the Father and sent his Spirit upon the company of disciples at Pentecost—and that Spirit rested upon each one of them. Those who witnessed the

wonders of that day said, "These men are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing up with the eleven said, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel, 'And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: Yea, and on my servants and on my hand-maidens in those days will I pour forth of my Spirit and they shall prophesy.'" To prophesy does not mean to foretell so much as to forth tell. A prophet was one who spoke for another. God said to Moses, "And Aaron, thy brother, shall be thy prophet," (thy spokesman). Now Joel foretold that, while then only a few, prophet, priest or king, had the gift of God's spirit and were commissioned to speak for Him, the time would come when things would be different. The time would come when, as God had abundantly poured out the rain, He would abundantly pour out His Spirit; not simply upon an official prophet, priest or king, but upon all, irrespective of age, sex or condition: young and old, bond and free, male and female, all should have the gift of God's Spirit, and he privileged, yes, commissioned to declare God's truth. This was fulfilled and is being fulfilled in this New Testament time, the age of the Spirit. So we

find Christians everywhere addressed thus: "Ye are the light of the world;" "Ye are the salt of the earth;" "And ye shall be my witnesses;" "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come,' and him that heareth, let him say, 'Come'." This is the very genius of the New Testament plan of the world's salvation, that every one, who hears and heeds the message of salvation, is to go out and declare it unto his fellows. We are stewards of the manifold grace of God, and it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. Christ's great commission to the Christian church recognizes no double standard of duty, but commands every disciple. "All power is given unto me, . . . go ye therefore, . . . make disciples, . . . and lo: I am with you all the days."

2. Again, let us note the danger of our times. In the business world to-day we do much of our business through middlemen, or commissioners. For example, I was recently in Greenville, Mich., an important potato market of that State. Now the farmers who live about Greenville, and who raise large quantities of excellent potatoes, do not sell these potatoes directly to the consumers, but bring them into North Greenville and sell them to the potato commissioners, allowing the middlemen a profit, or margin, for the selling of the potatoes. The commissioners sell them to the wholesalers, the wholesalers to retailers, the retailers to the consumers, and each gets a

profit, or margin, on the sales. In other words the middlemen are paid a living by the farmers for selling their potatoes for them. Thus much of the business of to-day is done. Now the danger of the times is just this: that people shall begin to try to meet their religious obligations too much in this same spirit. You say, "Why do we pay our pastor a salary? Why do we support the church? Why do we engage an evangelist, unless it is that they may do our religion for us, and save those whom we ought to be saving?" There is, to be sure, some truth implied in your query. But we must ever keep in mind that these personal, religious obligations cannot be easily nor safely shifted from layman to preacher. These responsibilities are ours, individually, and whenever we try to hire others to meet them for us, we ourselves suffer great personal loss, and the kingdom is hindered. Some years ago in many of our young cities there was a volunteer fire brigade. In every home was a bucket in the hall, full of water, marked "For fire!" ready for use. When the village, or city, fire bell rang, everybody dropped everything and ran for the bucket, and the fire. And, through hearty co-operation and a multitude of helpers, the conflagration was soon extinguished. But to-day, when the fire bell rings, we listen to the number, look at our fire card, and, if the fire is not in the neighborhood of our store or home, we leisurely

pursue our pleasure. We have hired somebody to fight our fires for us. In old New England days it was the custom that services should be begun in the meeting-houses "at early candle-lighting." As the people came to church, each brought a candle, and something with which to light it; when enough lighted candles had come to light the meeting-house, services would begin. But to-day, we have our oil-lights, or gas-lights, or our electric-lights in our churches; the janitor is hired to light them; and we leave our candles and our lights at home. And, believe me, there are places where, if you should wait until enough lighted candles had arrived to light up the meeting-house, before you should begin the service, services would never begin. We hire somebody to light up the church for us, and we leave our candles at home. Even as Mr. Moody was told in Scotland, when he complained of there being no fire in a certain church in extremely cold weather, "No, we have no fire: we expect you to warm us up," so do people here sometimes expect the preacher or pastor or evangelist to do all of the work, carry all of the burdens, and save all of the souls.

3. Yet the commands of God are individual; relationships are individual; responsibility is individual. The Bible everywhere treats men and women as individuals. We are not all alike, not blocks, not cogs in a wheel, not things; but per-

sons. No book in the world has done so much for the individual man, has so emphasized his worth and his personality, as has the Bible. It has brought about the abolition of slavery; it has introduced popular education; it has led to the building of hospitals; it has lessened the atrocities of war as well as the possibility of war; it has led to many labor-reforms, etc., largely through its emphasis of the fact and the worth of the individual. Both nature and revelation emphasize the fact of individuality. We are born as individuals; we live as individuals; we die as individuals. We are saved as individuals; Christ loves us and died for us as individuals, "tasting death for every man"; we are lost as individuals; we shall be judged as individuals. "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." God's commands are individual. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," are the two great commands of the Savior; and both of them are individual and personal. Our ability is the measure of our responsibility. God expects us to do only what we can do. If there is a single soul anywhere whom we can influence to come to Christ, if we do not so do, God can rightly hold us responsible for the consequences of our negligence. If a sin-

gle soul through our faithlessness is lost, who would have been saved had we been faithful, then, in some real sense, God can and will hold us responsible for that soul. This seems to be the plain teaching of Ezekiel 33 as well as the plain implication of other passages of Scripture. How earnest and active ought each one of us to be! There is a question in the minds of some people as to what is the present position and work of the church of Christ. Is the church a fine palace, filled with beauty and luxury, in the midst of a cool grove, with music and gaiety resounding through its halls and its rooms filled with pleasure seekers? Or is it a lighthouse out upon the reefs, its rays of brightness and light shining far out over the deep? Which is it, a palace full of pleasure seekers, or a lighthouse, filled with life-savers? But a more personal question is, "How does your life and mine count?" Are we helping to make our church simply a pleasure palace, or are we helping to make it a life-saving station? How does your life count in your church? Some people are wondering whether the church is a brass-trimmed yacht out on a pleasant cruise; or whether it is a life-boat, thrust out through the surf, each man pulling an oar. Which is it, life-boat or pleasure yacht? How does your life count in your church? Is your church more of a life-boat, because you are a member there; or is your church more of a

pleasure yacht, because of your membership in it? Which way does *your* life count? Do you recall the story of Old Skipper Ireson? Ireson was a fisherman in Marblehead. With his mates, he had been out at the Banks, and had made a large haul of fish. On their way home they sighted a vessel near by, flying a flag of distress. We don't know who was really to blame, whether it was Ireson or his men. At any rate, somebody said, "Oh, don't pay any attention to that flag! We're fishermen. We don't belong to any life-saving station. Our business is to catch fish, not to save men; and we're very successful at our business too." And so they made haste to port in order to forestall the market, and sell their fish at a good price. They did so, I suppose. But, you know, that night the widows and women of Marblehead "took old Floyd Ireson for his hard heart, and tarred and feathered him and carried him in a cart." Why was it? What had he done? Ah, that was just it! He hadn't done anything! He had simply made the mistake of saying, as some of you are saying, "My business is something else. I'm not a life-saver."

4. There are times of peculiar privilege and peculiar peril, which times are also times of peculiar and special responsibility. Any church which determines to go into a special effort to save the lost, which opens up its doors night after night and day after day for evangelistic services,

takes upon itself a terrible responsibility. I don't know whether you appreciated what you were doing when you decided to undertake these meetings. You have, I trust, opened out before yourselves a door of great privilege. I know that you have brought upon yourselves peculiar peril and a time of special responsibility. At such a time as this many souls are very sensitive. It is a time when it is easy to lead people to Christ. It is also a time when it is very easy to offend and harden and turn people away from Christ. Oh, how carefully and prayerfully we ought to walk at such a time as this! How wise we need to be to see and to seize every possible chance to take advantage of the tide and bring people into the harbor of life! Well might a great preacher say, "I always pray for such times, but I also dread them." It is a time of such peril. The rain that falls softens some soil, and hardens other soil. When the seed is sown, some will fall by the wayside, some on stony ground, some among thorns, some into good ground. "What shall the harvest be?" People will come to these meetings conscious of the purpose of the meetings; people will come to these meetings with the call of God inviting their souls to submission; people will come to these meetings expecting a plain personal appeal from the pulpit; people will come to these meetings rightly expecting a warm, cordial reception in the pew; people will come to

these meetings and go out from these meetings never again to be as they have been; some will be better, some worse, some more inclined toward faith, some more hardened against all religion, some with souls forever saved, some never again to attend any special meetings, only to go on and on in indifference and sin. What shall the results of these meetings be? What are you and I willing to make them? Down in an Ohio city a few years ago I was holding a special series of meetings in the Baptist church, and was told that the large high-school building, which adjoined the church, stood upon the water-shed of Ohio. The water which fell upon one side of the roof ran into the headwaters of the Sandusky River, down the Sandusky into Lake Erie and into Lake Ontario, and down the St. Lawrence into the North Atlantic Ocean. The water which fell on the other side of the roof went into the headwaters of the Scioto River, down the Scioto into the Ohio, down the Ohio into the Mississippi, down the Mississippi into the Gulf of Mexico. Now, for purposes of illustration, it is not at all difficult to imagine a drop of water about to fall right above the ridge-pole of that roof. The slightest breeze, either from the north or from the south, will change the entire future history of that drop of water. The ridge-pole and the moment of falling constitute a crisis in the little life of that rain-drop. If the

breeze is a warm southern breeze, the drop will fall upon the north side of the roof and start on its long journey to the North Atlantic Ocean. If the breeze is a cold northern one, the drop of rain will fall upon the southern side of the roof, and start on a long journey away down to the Gulf of Mexico. So there will come ridges of destiny, crises into human lives, in these meetings. The business of an evangelist is to bring these crises. The purpose of these meetings is to bring people to decision. What shall your influence be? By a cold northern blast, by an unsympathetic hand-shake, by half-hearted singing, by lack of prayerfulness in demeanor, and in heart life, by general indifference to the spiritual purposes of the occasion, will you discourage a sensitive soul, destroy a heavenly impulse, drive away God's Holy Spirit, and hinder some person from accepting Christ? Or, by a sweet prayerful spirit, by a warm genial personality, by a hearty welcome and decent hand-shake, by soulful singing and attentive presence, will you cheer and encourage, as with a warm, sunny southern breeze, some sensitive soul to start on a blessed journey of life, upward and heavenward and Christ-ward, until at last there shall be no sin which has not been conquered, and no excellence which has not been acquired? What part will you choose to have in these meetings?

God is going to bless us. There is no doubt of

that. He has promised always to bless His truth, and I believe that in a special way His Spirit broods over such a meeting as this. But, whether the blessing which we shall surely receive, shall be a large one, or a small one, will depend very largely upon us. We can limit it, or we can enlarge it. We can hinder it or we can help it. Would you know how specially to help? Four things may here and now be mentioned. (1) Nothing but united, earnest effort can bring the largest blessing. We must be willing for the time to side-track all extras, dress-making, parties, special entertainments, etc., and give the meetings the first place. (2) We ought to have a prayer-time and a prayer-list. Once every day, in closet, in the home, in the store, on the street, or wherever we may happen to be, we ought to lift our hearts in earnest prayer that God may specially bless these meetings, bless the pastor and evangelist, bless the church-members and those in the Sunday Schools, bless the unsaved; and, above all, let each one pray for himself, "O God, help me to be helpful." "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of wickedness in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Not only a prayer-time but a prayer-list. We must not only talk to men about God. We need also to talk to God about men, and we should do this first. Don't have the prayer-list

too long. We need to concentrate as well as consecrate. "To keep shot from scattering put in only one shot." We need definiteness of aim. The man who says, "I'm praying that the whole town may be converted," is probably not praying or working very definitely for anybody. Start your prayer-list right now, if you have not already done so. Somebody in your home, in your neighborhood, in your Sunday-School class, in your social sphere, ought to be saved in these meetings. You know who it is. Begin now to pray for that one; then follow up your definite prayers with definite work, and God will greatly bless. (3) Make one call each day in the interest of the meetings. I don't mean a formal call, nor what once was named "a religious call." What is desired is that you should summon up all of the graciousness of your personality, and in the most interested and persuasive way possible, speak to at least one person each day about the meetings. If you can't say something good about the meetings, don't say anything. Make up your mind to be, if possible, a walking advertisement among your friends in the interest of these services. (4) Make an earnest and honest attempt to bring one person with you to each service. Make an engagement with a friend. Call at the house for him. It will help you to be unselfish, will put you, through self-sacrifice, into a better spirit for the meetings, and you'll share with your

friend a blessing. These four suggestions will be of great assistance to the meetings, if followed faithfully by you. Is it too much to ask you for ten days honestly to try to do these four things; put the meetings first, have a prayer-time and a prayer-list, make one call or speak to some one each day persuasively about the meetings, make an honest attempt to bring somebody with you to each service? Perhaps it is too much to ask for the pastor's sake, for the church's sake, for your own sake, for the community's sake, for some soul's sake. Is it too much to ask for Christ's sake? For His sake, will you try?

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

Philippians 1:9-11.—"*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, so that ye may approve the things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*"

THE apostle Paul was not only a man of intense activity, but he was also a man of much prayer. That he was much given to prayer appears not only from the frequent mention of the fact in Luke's historical material in the book of Acts, and from the frequent mention of it by Paul himself in practically all of his epistles; but it appears also from the fact that he knew how to pray Prayer is a fine art. It is something that must be learned. The disciples said to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John taught his disciples to pray." Paul had learned through much toil, through large and varied experiences, through patient practice, through

hours of devout meditation upon the Scriptures, how to pray. He was a master in prayer.

A splendid way for us to learn how to pray, a splendid way to learn how to deepen and to enrich our prayers, to learn how to keep them out of ruts and vain repetitions (and there is a considerable amount of inanity and empty phrasing in much prayer), is to make a study of the prayers of the Bible. The psalms are full of prayers, very appropriate to the lives of men and women of to-day. Let us collect some of them, meditate upon them, learn them, get into the true spirit of them, and make them our own. The historical books of the Old Testament have in them some very fine prayers. By studying prayers, we may teach ourselves how to pray. The gospels and the Acts have in them some very helpful prayers. Let us prayerfully drink in their spirit, and we ourselves shall know the better how to pray. In Paul's epistles we have much material upon this very important subject. In the first chapter of Colossians is a fine example of prayer, also in the first chapter of Paul's love-letter to the Philippians. Either of these passages is worthy of special study. We can take only the one from Philippians at this time for the subject of our meditation. The Philippians were very dear to Paul, and Paul was very dear to them. He doubtless felt that they were nearer his ideal of a church than any company of believers that

he had been privileged to gather. There was among them very little of irregularity in doctrine and practice. They were closely in sympathy with his work and with spiritual things. Paul could open his very heart to them, and we find in this letter more of the inner motives of the great apostle to the Gentiles expressed than in any other of his epistles. Paul had already received many tokens of the love of these Philippians. Twice before the occasion of this letter of gratitude, they had sent to relieve his necessities. And now that Paul is a prisoner at Rome, chained to a Roman soldier and no longer able to make his own living, the Philippians send to him by Epaphroditus an expression of love and that which would supply his need. In the spring of the year, as Epaphroditus is about to return to Philippi, Paul sends by his hand to the Philippians this letter of affection and grateful appreciation. After the usual salutation, the apostle expresses his thanksgiving for their past life, his confidence in their future, and his earnest prayer for their present. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Surely such a prayer, at such a time, for such dear

friends, and by such a master in prayer, is well worth earnest study. Paul does not pray for these Philippians that their knowledge may abound, nor yet that their influence may abound, nor yet that their physical health may abound, nor that their friends may abound, nor that their wealth may abound. He prays for that which is their fundamental need, that their love may abound. He who said, "Faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love," recognizes that the real need of life is more love; love for Christ, love for each other, love for those for whom the Savior died. He prays not for a love which may fill one little corner of the heart and life, he prays not for a love which may fill half of the heart; but for a love which abounds, and for a love which keeps on growing and abounding more and yet more. But this love for which he prays must not be empty emotion, or zeal without knowledge, but love founded on and increasing with increasing knowledge. Love without knowledge is apt to be weak and without endurance. Knowledge without love may be as cold and lifeless as marble. But love which increases as knowledge increases, and knowledge which increases as love is deeper and broader, when linked together, constitute the very dynamite of God. But there is a peculiar kind of knowledge which Paul would have them possess, that knowledge which leads to discrimination. One of the great problems of

life is to know what is worth while; what is of real value and what is comparatively worthless. In proportion as we discriminate between values and approve only those things which are excellent, we are in the path of real progress. If we are really and truly growing in grace and in the knowledge of His will, the road over which we have thus far journeyed will be strewn with cast-off things, things to which we once clung and which we thought were valuable, but which we have since learned were "weights." We shall be coming more and more to "cast aside the weights and the sins that so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race set before us." Now Paul prays for these friends that their love may abound more and yet more in knowledge and all discernment, that they may test things and approve only those things that are excellent. And what would be the logical result of a life of love, abounding more and yet more in knowledge and all discernment, testing things and approving only what is excellent? It would be a life "sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ." A sincere life is a life which can bear the searching light of the noontide sun, a life in which there is no pretence, no sham, no make-believe, a life which is as it appears to be; while a life "void of offence unto the day of Christ" is a life in which there is nothing over which the possessor would stumble, and nothing which would cause others to stumble;

a life which will be able to stand the test of that day when all secrets shall be told, and the hidden shall be revealed. Such a life of love, abounding with knowledge, leading to the testing of things and the approval only of excellent things, resulting in sincerity and absence of any cause of stumbling, even to the day of Christ, will be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Not a little fruit here and there, but "filled with fruits"; fruits which are the result of right living and result in righteous character; fruits which do not come through one's own unaided efforts, but "through Jesus Christ"; fruits which result not in self-glorification, but "unto the glory and praise of God." Such is the wonderful course of thought in Paul's prayer for the Philippians. He begins with abounding love, he ends with abounding fruitfulness. Every link in the golden chain is necessary, and necessary in the order named. Omit a single link, and the beauty and strength of the chain are gone. Abounding love coupled with abounding knowledge, the testing of things and approval of that only which is excellent, a life sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ, a life filled with fruits, through Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. How logical it all is! There can never be abounding fruit apart from the fulfilling of these necessary conditions. We

often long and pray for more fruit. Let us remember that "fruits come from roots" and see to it that we fulfill the plain conditions of a harvest.

Prof. Drummond once said that if any Christian would take that remarkable chapter on love, first Corinthians, thirteen, and read it once a day carefully and prayerfully for two years, it would marvelously enrich and deepen his Christian experience. I feel similarly about this prayer of Paul. If you will study it and learn it (it is very easy to commit, as it is so logical) and incorporate it into your daily petitions for two years, it will wonderfully enlarge your conception of the Christian life, will enrich your prayers, and deepen your spiritual experience. Will you try it for yourself?

How Unnatural It Is!

Luke 14:18.—"And they all with one consent began to make excuse."

NO one ever came to mankind upon a more merciful mission than did Jesus of Nazareth; and yet, no one was ever more shabbily treated by men than he. At the beginning of his public preaching, in the synagogue of his home town, He plainly declared that his ministry was to be a ministry of healing and of help, his message a message of liberty and light. In one of the glowing prophecies of the great Isaiah he found the best prediction of his gracious word and work:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

"Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:

"He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,

"And recovery of sight to the blind,

"To set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

What could be a greater boon to the poor than the bringing to them of this glad message of salvation? What else could be more helpful to the captive than release from his bonds? Could a blind man desire more than the recovery of his sight? Could the bruised and broken-hearted have a greater gift than to be set at liberty? Could any time be more welcome than the acceptable year of the Lord? This was the merciful mission upon which Christ came. And yet, when he referred to their unbelief, they at once forgot his gracious sayings, and determined to hurl him headlong to destruction. Driven out of Nazareth Jesus wished to make Capernaum his home. To them also he brought healing and help. "But he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Soon after this he went over to the eastern shore of Galilee into the country of the Gadarenes, and he had no sooner set foot upon their land than he healed a man that had been the terror of the town, restoring him to sanity of mind, to his home and to usefulness; but the people of that place cared more for hogs than for a man, and asked Jesus to leave their country. He wished to pass through Samaria to Jerusalem, but the Samaritans begged him to go around some other way. He even "came unto his own and his own received him not." As Jerusalem turned away

from him he cried aloud in awful agony, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I . . . and ye would not." This was, in general, the shabby treatment that he everywhere received. Foxes had holes and birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. He was "the stone which the builders rejected." Even very early in his public ministry, in a time of short popularity, he warningly taught his disciples of the unwelcome attitude of men toward himself and toward his truth. Some people would be like wayside hearers, utterly indifferent; some would be like stony ground hearers, shallow and fickle; some would be like thorn-bearing ground, preoccupied with other things. And now again, toward the earthly close of his ministry, in this parable of the great supper, we find that which expresses the heart-break of the Son of God. Did the human race ever have another who was so true a friend as Jesus; and was there ever another so despised and rejected of men? How merciful a mission was his! How mercilessly the messenger was received!

The occasion of the parable, which furnishes our text, was this: Jesus was present as a guest at a great feast given by one of the Pharisees. As usual he used every incident and remark for good. He was ever about his Father's business. As he went into the house he healed a man of

dropsy. Noting the proud and unseemly rush of the guests for the best places at the table, he spoke tellingly of the grace of humility. When he noted that the rich man had invited only those who could repay him, he strikingly taught that service, not selfishness, is the way to the highest happiness. What a master in the high art of religious conversation our great Teacher was! As he thus spoke, one of the guests that sat at meat with him said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," thinking, doubtless, in his pharisaical heart that, if anyone would be there, he would be there. But no; not mere lip-service, but reception of the kingdom into the heart and into the life are the conditions of its enjoyment. "Then said Jesus unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

How will you account for the *unnaturalness* of this story of Jesus? Jesus was a master in telling stories. No one ever used the parable so power-

fully as he, and his parables were all so true to life: except this one. Who ever heard of a person making a great feast, and inviting many friends; and all of these friends begging off instead of eagerly rushing to the banquet boards, rushing even as Jesus had so recently witnessed them doing in this Pharisee's house. How unnatural this story seems! Compare it with the naturalness of the other parables of Jesus. For example, Jesus said: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and has lost but one of them, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the valley and go after the lost sheep till he finds it? Then, when he finds it, he is rejoiced, and puts it on his shoulders; and on reaching home, he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Come and share my gladness, for I have found my sheep which was lost.'" Many a person who heard Jesus tell that story must have thought within himself, "How true to life that is! That's just exactly what I would do under the circumstances! What a wonderful story-teller he is! So, too, there will be more gladness in Heaven, I tell you, over one godless man that repents than over ninety-nine pious men, who have no need to repent." Again, when Jesus said, turning to the women who stood in the audience: "Suppose a woman has ten coins; if she loses one of them [in her dark, earth-floored, windowless, oriental house] does she not light a lamp and

sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? Then, when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Come and share my gladness, for I have found the coin which I lost.'" When Jesus used this illustration, many a woman in that audience must have said within herself, "How true to life that is! That's just exactly what I would do under those circumstances. What a natural story-teller he is!" But, when Jesus told of a man that made a great feast (note that it was a feast, not a fast nor a funeral), and invited many friends, and at supper time they all began with one consent to beg off, one friend must have turned to another and said, "Did you ever hear of anything so contrary to life, so unnatural?" How shall we account for the unnaturalness of this parable of Jesus as compared with the naturalness of all his other parables? There seems to be only one rational explanation of it. Jesus wished to show forth in a story the unnatural way in which people treat the Kingdom of God, and nothing but an unnatural story would adequately set forth that unnatural attitude. With reference to no other thing do people act so unreasonably and so unnaturally as they act with reference to spiritual matters. This unnatural story is a vivid picture of the unnatural conduct of men with reference to such matters. How truly it describes that conduct! When the first invitation was

sent out about the coming feast, every one that had been invited doubtless replied, "Tell your master that I shall be delighted to come"; otherwise the master would not have prepared his feast, nor have sent out the servant the second time to say to those that had been bidden, "Come, for all things are now ready." It was only when the second invitation was sent out, saying, "Come now" that they all with one consent began to beg off. So it is to-day. When right sentiment is all that is required, it is easily obtained; but when right action is called for, they all with one consent begin to beg off. When the preacher says, "Do you believe in Christianity? Do you expect some day to become a Christian?" a ready response is given. But, when the preacher says, "Come now; now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. Oh that to-day you would hear His voice! Harden not your heart," then it is that so many begin to make excuse. Many people want heaven and desire to go to heaven, but they are unwilling to leave sin and fulfill the conditions of pardon, peace and power. Their sentiment is right, but they are unwilling to act. When presence at the feast required the giving up of some other things, these men were unwilling to pay the price. So when the enjoyment of the spiritual feast involves the giving of certain antagonistic things some people are unwilling to meet the conditions.

Note again that all of these professed excuses and objections were mere pretexts and quibbles, and that all of them indicated simply one thing, i. e., that these men did not think that that feast was a matter of supreme importance. These pretexts, all of them, indicated simply indifference to the worth of the feast. Property, business cares, social relationships were put first because these men thought that they were of the first importance. If *you* would let the matter of personal relationship to Christ take the place in your thought and life that you know that it ought to take, all of your pretexts and quibbles would quickly vanish, and you would become a Christian at once. Let us each heed the injunction of the Savior "Seek first the kingdom of God."

There was really no good reason why any one of these men should have missed that feast. They were invited in ample time, so that they could have arranged their affairs accordingly. At supper time another notice had been sent them, lest anyone should forget the engagement. Places had been prepared for every one of them. So all have been invited to the spiritual feast, and every possible means is being used to induce each one to share in its blessings. There is really no good reason why you should miss its privileges. And yet many of you are saying, "I pray thee have me excused." Excused from what? Excused from pardon and sweet peace; excused

from the truest happiness of earth, and from a rational hope of heaven; excused from the inspiring friendship and fellowship of the Son of God; excused from the largest life both here and hereafter. Excused for what? That I may carry a little longer a burdened, sin-cursed heart; that I may a little longer live a selfish, Christless, disappointing life, that I may go into a Godless eternity, forever separated "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thes. 1:9). "I pray thee have me excused." It seems to me a very tragic thing that you should choose to turn away from such a feast. A still more tragic time will it be when God shall take you at your word, and say, "I will. Be thou excused forever." "Depart from me all ye that work iniquity." Let us note two of the many pretexts that are frequently presented. This is a very common one: "There are so many hypocrites in the church. I pick my company. If I could find a church that did not have any hypocrites in it I would become a Christian and join that church." You say that you pick your company. Then I want to say that in choosing to remain in the world and out of the church you are picking the company of the worst sort of hypocrites; for there are more hypocrites ten to one in the outside world than there are in the church of Jesus Christ. Do you really desire to avoid the company of hypocrites? Then it would

be wisdom for you to prepare for the future, for in the next world, when the tares and the wheat shall have been separated from each other, all hypocrites and "all that maketh a lie" will be found in that Christless place to which you, as a Christless man, are going. Again, do you act thus when you enter any of the other callings or occupations of life? Into what profession or occupation can you enter where there are no hypocrites? Are there no hypocrites in the legal profession? In the medical profession? In business life? In any department of living? Let us act as sensibly with reference to religion as we act in other departments of life. Did you refuse to join the lodge, because there is not a lodge upon earth that has not in it some hypocrites? Do you act thus with reference to any other matter? Is it possible that you yourself are playing the hypocrite with regard to these most sacred things? Is it not one of the most despicable of all habits, this habit of trying to hide from a plain, personal duty behind the failings of one's fellows? Is it not unmanly in every sense? Does it not smack of hypocrisy? "But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14: 10, 12). "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that

judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself" (Rom. 2:1). You know what is right, or you would not be able to condemn what is wrong. After all, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." The very best way to avoid hypocrites and hypocrisy is to be thoroughly honest yourself, and to see to it that you fail in no known duty. "What is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:22).

Another pretext that we very frequently hear is this: "There are so many things in the Bible and in Christianity that I don't understand, so many things that even the preachers do not understand. If only I could understand all about these things, I should become a Christian." Let me ask you, my friend, have you ever honestly tried to understand the Bible? Tell me now, truly, how many times have you read the Bible through with the earnest desire to know the truth in order to do the truth? How many times? Half a dozen times? I do not believe that there is a single person here who has read this book through six times, honestly and earnestly seeking the truth, who is yet in the dark about the necessary things. Jesus himself made the broad statement, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know the truth." Here in the Bible we have the simplest, and yet the profoundest, book of the ages; a book that has been more productive in stirring the thoughts and hearts of men than any book in

existence. And yet you find fault with this book, and refuse to accept its teachings, merely because after a hasty glance over its pages you do not understand all of its mysteries. In this you are glaringly inconsistent. You do not act thus with reference to any other matter. Oh, that we would each one of us be as reasonable with reference to religion as to other affairs of life! How unnaturally we treat spiritual things! Here is a book on higher mathematics, or calculus, or on bridge-building. I should be very foolish to refuse to believe in its accuracy, or in its worth, simply because I could not at a mere glance understand all of its propositions or all of its formulæ. And yet this is your attitude toward religion. Do not all of the deeper and higher thoughts of life require much study and patient toil before we can make them truly our own? Do you say that you *have* been studying, and yet cannot see? Then remember that Scripture itself tells us, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2: 14). Cry out to God, that He may open your heart and your mind, that He may touch your spirit that it may live. Pray to Him that He may help you to believe on Christ. First receive Him. Enter the school of Christ as a willing learner, and, having been born of the Spirit, you will

begin to understand spiritual things. Do you say that you are unwilling to believe in or make use of anything that you do not see or anything that you do not understand? Do you understand electricity? You say, "No, I do not, for I am not a scientist." And yet you use it in one form or another almost every day. But does any one understand just what it is? Let us ask Thomas Edison, the wizard of Menlo Park, the man who knows more about it than any one else: "Mr. Edison, what is electricity?" And this is his answer: "Electricity is a mysterious fluid about which nothing is known." Let us ask another great electrician, Nicola Tesla: "Mr. Tesla, what is electricity?" And we hear this answer: "Exactly what electricity is no one knows. We call it a fluid. We know that it gives light, heat and power; and we are daily turning it to the uses of mankind." Let us, then, accept the Bible and Christianity in the same spirit. We may not understand all of its mysteries, but we know that it gives light, heat and power, and is wonderfully adapted to the needs of men: it alone furnishes the light of the world, the heat of a divine enthusiasm, and the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Unless we thus treat these things we very manifestly lay ourselves open to the charge of inconsistency, if not of hypocrisy. You say that you will not believe in anything that you do not understand? Do you

understand the whole process of digestion and assimilation? Do you understand how it is that the food which you eat turns some of it into bone, some into muscle, some into hair, some of it into skin, some of it, perchance, into brain? Can you follow to their final issue these mysterious processes? Can any one do so? And yet, you continue to eat. But if I ever hear of your eating again, and at the same time hear that you give this as a pretext for not becoming a Christian, i. e., that you cannot understand many of the things in the Bible, I shall have strong reason to believe that you are not sincere and that you do not act as sensibly here as in other walks of life. Let us be as reasonable about religion as we are in other matters. Let us never forget that all things that are necessary to salvation and to the development of a strong Christian character are perfectly plain and clear in the Bible, so clear that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." The Bible always gives a plain, clear answer to two great questions: "What has God in His overflowing love done for the salvation of men?" and, "What must each member of the race do in order to make this salvation his own?" Both of these great questions are at once answered in that well-known verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." In the days of the

cities of refuge it was the law that three cities should be on each side of the Jordan, one in the north, one in the center, and one in the south, easy of access from all parts of the land. The roads leading to these cities must be kept constantly in the best of repair, all valleys must be filled up, all hills must be leveled, all streams must be bridged, all crooked places must be made straight. Should there be any uncertain place in the road, a plain signboard should be erected pointing in the direction of safety. So plain and clear, also, has the highway of life been made in the Bible. No one can miss the way who follows the simple directions. Some years ago a wealthy planter was visiting an aged and dying negro, who lived on a remote portion of the plantation. While the master and the sinking slave talked far into the night, a terrible storm arose. At last the master felt that he must leave the slave, and go to his own home. The night was dark, the storm was bad. The old negro said: "I'se sorry, massa, that I has no better, but you must take dis ole pine knot to light you to de house. De night is dark; de storm is bad; it'll light you home." "But, Sam," said the master, "I have never used a pine knot in my life." "I knows it," said the negro, "but de night is dark; de storm is bad; it'll light you home." "But won't the wind blow it out?" asked the master. To which the negro made the same reply: "Oh,

massa, de night is dark; de storm is bad; it'll light you home." To every objection that you may bring to the Bible I would give the same answer: "The night is dark; the storm is bad; it will light you home."

Truest Liberty

John 8: 34, 36.—"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin." "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

ONE of the most inspiring of all human thoughts is the idea of liberty, the thought of freedom. Of it poets have sweetly sung. In treating of it writers have been greatly stirred. By the mere mention of it orators have swayed multitudes of men. Many of the mightiest struggles of the centuries have been "for sweet Freedom's sake." Nations have waded through blood in order to achieve it. Multitudes have fought and died to bequeath it to their descendants. By the judgment of mankind those people are most blessed who enjoy the most of it; those people are to be pitied who are deprived of its benefits. The human race has never forgotten its divine heritage. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have

dominion." Made in the image and likeness of God, and made to rule; this is the divine decree. Never do we feel that we are so truly men and women as when we realize that we are truly free. Never do we feel so humiliated and discouraged as when we are forced to admit that we are in some awful sense slaves. Nothing so enlarges, ennobles and inspires as the conscious possession of truest liberty. Nothing so dwarfs and destroys the possibilities of life as the sense of slavery. Patrick Henry's famous words will always strike a true chord in every honest heart: "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me give me liberty or give me death!"

No people on the face of the whole earth enjoy more liberty than we do, we who live in this favored land, "the land of the free and the home of the brave." And yet, no people more than we need to learn the real nature of truest liberty. We make a great mistake when we confound liberty with license; when we suppose that to be truly free means to live without any limitations, and "to do as we please." This seems to be the idea of liberty that many of our boys and girls possess. This appears to be the idea of liberty that some of our immigrants hold. All such need to learn that there is nowhere such a thing as unrestrained liberty. All liberty has its limita-

tions. One day, as we stood beside the stream and watched the fishes swimming here and there so easily and so freely, we said within ourselves, "How free they are! They come and go as they please; their liberty is boundless." But it was not so. Their liberty was limited by the banks of the stream. They had liberty only so long as they were willing to fulfill the laws of their liberty, and to live according to their true nature as water animals. Fishes out of water lose their liberty. Liberty is limited. Often we have watched birds flying hither and yonder, and we have thought, "Oh, that I had wings like a bird! I could then go anywhere." But even the liberty of birds is limited by the density of the atmosphere. They can fly only where their wings can bear them. They must be careful also to fly around impenetrable objects, and not to go against electric wires or into places of peril. Their liberty is limited. Sometimes we have stood on the ocean's shore, and have watched the waves dancing and playing in the sunlight, and we have thought, "What freedom they enjoy! They can go wherever they please." But it is not so. God has set barriers even to ocean's waves. He has said even to them, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther: here must thy proud waves be stayed." Their liberty also is limited. Perhaps some one may mention the mind of man: how limitless apparently are its liberties

and its possibilities! In a moment in thought one may be in distant Africa, or in remote Asia, or almost anywhere. Yes, anywhere, but somewhere. What seemingly boundless possibilities in the realm of the imagination! And yet, one cannot imagine anything the parts of which he has not seen. We only think in the terms of space and time and size. The infinite and infinitessimal bound our intellect horizon. There is no such thing as limitless liberty even for the mind. Perhaps some one may mention God, and say of Him, "He has absolute liberty." But it is not true. Even God has self-imposed limitations about Him. There are things that even God cannot do, if He would retain His moral freedom and His power as a righteous Ruler. Scripture distinctly tells us of some of these limitations: that He cannot lie, that He cannot be unrighteous, that He cannot act in a manner unbecoming His highest moral worthiness. Some things are mutually exclusive. The room cannot be flooded with light and darkness at one and the same time. The possession of certain attributes excludes their opposites, and forbids contrary actions. Even God is limited in His liberty. There is, then, no such thing as unrestricted liberty anywhere—liberty without limitations, liberty to do anything and everything. Liberty is only a relative matter. Never is it absolute or unconditional.

It is very important that we should keep these

considerations in mind when we are making the greatest choice in life. How often we hear some person say, "I should become a Christian if it were not for the things I would be compelled to give up." This pretext is so frequently given with the quiet but wholly false assumption that to remain away from Christ means to give up nothing. The question of questions is not "whether we shall give up something, or give up nothing." The only question is, "*What* shall we give up?" Shall we give up the Savior, or shall we give up Satan? Shall we give up pardon, peace and power? Or shall we give up sin, selfishness and shame? Scripture never urges us to decide whether or not we will serve; but constantly urges us to choose *whom* we shall serve. It is purely a question of choice of masters and of character of service. Where can we find the truest and the highest liberty? This is the real question. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Two possibilities are before each one of us. One of two choices we may make: we may choose to serve Satan, and through sin and selfishness become more and more enslaved; or we may choose to serve the Savior, and through unselfishness and service become more and more truly free. "Choose you this day whom you will

serve." Satan and slavery, or Christ and liberty. What is your choice? As one has strikingly put it, "It is simply a question of either, or." "One or the other." You must choose. You are choosing. Upon this choice of yours hangs your liberty in service, or your servitude in sin.

Satan says to every person, "Come and serve me, and you will have a good time, a free time; you'll see life, without any restraints. If you become a Christian you'll have to put on a straight-jacket; you'll live a narrow, constrained life. But if you'll serve me, you will have absolute liberty to do just as you please to do." No greater falsehood could be spoken. The devil's first lie to our first parents was a part of this same piece. "If you will eat of the fruit of the tree, your eyes shall be opened and you will become as gods, knowing good and evil." This was his promise; and we know the result. They believed his lie; they ate of the forbidden fruit; their eyes were opened; but what they saw was their own shame. Satan deceived them by a promise of liberty, and led them into captivity to sin. So it has been from that sad day to this very hour. He is always promising people liberty; and sometimes for a season he allows his dupes a show of freedom, but only that later on he may the more surely and completely enslave them. Most people sin at first under the mistaken notion that they are going to gain from sin some real advantage.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." A man begins to steal under the mistaken notion that he will get a real gain through it. A person begins to indulge in this vice, or in the gratifying of that appetite, thinking that some true advantage will come to him in this way; and down in his heart there is a sort of pity for those who do not see the profit as he sees it. But his supposed liberty soon changes into slavery, and his supposed advantage is soon discovered to be loss. This is a part of the terrible deceitfulness of sin. Sin is an octopus, a devilfish, with a thousand blood-sucking tentacles to suck the life from young and old, and leave them powerless in the clutches of appetite and passion. Sin is the mirage in the journey of life, every beckoning the traveler onward with promises of coming refreshment, and yet always receding before his urgent pursuit. Sin is the Dead Sea upon the geography of time, drinking in all of the pure waters of lofty possibilities, with no outlet of blessing, and giving back nothing but blight. Sin is well represented as a slimy serpent "with a fang in its jaw, a crush in its coils, and a sting in its tail." Sin is the great mistake, the huge folly, the colossal deception. Upon one arm of a French convict were tattooed the words: "Satan is a hard mas-

ter, his work is worse, and his wages are the worst of all." Upon the other arm his own sad experience of sin was well described in the awful words, "The past deceived me, the present torments me, the future terrifies me." Surely "he that committeth sin becomes the slave of sin." Well may the writer of Ecclesiastes, in the eleventh chapter and in the ninth verse, warningly say to the reckless, foolish follower of evil, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." "Be sure your sin will find you out." As Professor Drummond once said, "It won't, perhaps, be found out; but I say it will find you out. It will grow and grow, and eat out your life. It will run you to death a doomed man." "For sin when it is ripe bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1: 15). It is too late in the history of the human family for any intelligent person to believe the lie of the devil when he says, "If you will serve me, you will be a free man." Let no person believe him. His record is against him. He has shown himself always to be no true friend to the race; he is well known in history as "The Great Deceiver." The greatest friend that humanity has ever had and the greatest teacher that the world has ever seen said of Satan, "There is no truth in him. When

he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8: 44). Let us rather believe the Lord Jesus Christ when he says, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin. If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." Some one has significantly likened the sinner's experience to the experiences of those who were the victims of one kind of mediæval torture. It was the custom in those days to take the victim of persecution to a large palace, where he was given a beautiful room with polished floor and decorated walls, with massive windows through which appeared wonderful vistas of mountain and river scenery, with a large opening skyward through which heaven's glory was always visible. For a time he was treated most royally, and might well have supposed himself to be an honored guest in the home of a lavish friend. But this delusion is soon dispelled. One day he finds that the door to his palatial room has been barred, and to his horror he notices that the decorated walls are slowly but surely moving inward. Anxiously, hour by hour, he paces the polished floor, and measures the distance from wall to wall. There can be no mistake about it. Instead of being a guest in the home of a friend, it begins to dawn upon him that he is a prisoner in a castle of persecution. Steadily and surely the walls continue to move inward. Soon he will

be crushed to death. Oh, that some heavenly friend would reach down a mighty helping hand, and rescue him from his imminent peril! How many have thus been deceived and disappointed Satan and by sin! With reference to masters also one may say, "By their fruits you shall know them." As a drunken man reeled out from a saloon door, and fell upon the pavement in front of the hell-hole, a street urchin called in the doorway to the saloon-keeper, and said, "Say, mister, your sign has fallen down!" And what the boy said was terribly and tragically true. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Let us take the two persons in our acquaintance who for the last ten years have most faithfully served one Satan and the other the Savior. Let us put them before us side by side for purposes of study. Which one has enjoyed during these ten years the largest and the truest liberty? And which one is now the most truly free? Can there be any uncertainty as to the answer? Such a comparative study will always reveal the truth of Christ's teaching, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin. If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

In nothing is the deceitfulness and the enslaving power of sin more clearly manifest than in the two-fold fact that every indulgence increases desire, and correspondingly decreases capacity

for enjoyment. As one continues to practice any sin the passion grows, and the craving for more and more becomes constantly stronger, while the return satisfaction from a given amount of indulgence continually diminishes. Take the drink habit for an example of all sin in its working. The young drinker gets at first much exhilaration from a small amount of liquor; but, as he continues to drink, his appetite terribly increases, and it takes more and more liquor to satisfy him. This rule holds good from first to finish. And when he has become a broken-down drunkard (something that he never expected to become), with a drunkard's heart and with a drunkard's liver; when the physician tells him that, if he would continue to live, he must drink no longer; then sin has well-nigh accomplished its deceitful work. The craving for drink has now become something awful; and the possibility to enjoy liquor has gone forever. Then the devil, who promised so much liberty at first, has finally accomplished his purpose, and has chained his slave. Then doubtless the Great Deceiver feels a diabolical satisfaction, and laughs in hellish glee, "Aha! I've got you! At last you are mine!" Before every human being two possible paths are open. One begins large and broad, with many promises of pleasure and profit. Into its wide avenues multitudes throng. At the opening of the way no questions are asked, no requirements

are made. For a while the walking is pleasant, the companionships sweet, the environment fascinating. Little by little, however, the path begins to narrow and to roughen, the friendships become less and less satisfying, the conditions more and more difficult. On and still on the travelers go, not noticing nor caring to realize that the path grows constantly narrower and rougher. Soon deep valleys and high hills interrupt the way, valleys of despondency and defeat, hills of disease and debt. Clouds of sorrow begin to gather; the light of life begins to fade. Narrower and rougher, rougher and narrower grows the way. Deeper become the valleys, higher and more precipitous the hills, until at last the path enters the deep, dark, dreary valley of the shadow of death, where all music is hushed, where no human friends can help, and where the constantly narrowing way narrows down to the six feet of a grave. And that grave narrows into "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his might." (2 Thess. 1:9). Is this the path that *you* are traveling? There is another and a better way. The Savior said, "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). This is the better way. It

begins with a narrow gate and a straitened path. You cannot drift into it, nor be carried into it by the throng. You must enter it by personal, purposeful decision. It is a narrow, lowly gate; you must stoop to enter here. You must renounce all allegiance to others than the King of this way; you must confess your sin, and your need of His Son as your Savior. You must follow His leadership. The road at first may seem narrow and rough; but as you trustingly and obediently travel along it you will assuredly find that it gradually grows broader and better. Give good heed to the guide-boards along the way, for they minister much to the joy and safety of the traveler. The farther on you go, the broader and brighter and better it will be. There is music here that never loses its charm, there are companions here whose conversation never fails to inspire, there are pleasures here that never grow old. Let no one suppose, however, that there are no valleys or hills along this road; for there are hills of discouragement and hills of doubt, valleys of dark sorrow and valleys of sore trial. But when one comes to these hills of difficulty, many friends are there to help; and when one passes through the valleys, even the King's Son himself is present as comforter and guide. A blessed guarantee is given to all who go along this way. "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passeth

through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." On and on this highway leads "growing brighter unto the perfect day." As one nears its earthly end it is seen to pass over the sun-kissed hills of God and through the sweet valleys of peace; and just over beyond the beautifully bridged river of transition, this way, I am told, broadens out into the very boulevards of heaven. Which path are *you* choosing, a path that grows narrower and narrower and narrower, leading through disappointment to defeat and death; or a path that grows brighter and broader and better, leading through light to liberty and life? Which path will you take, which life will you choose: a life that, like an inverted funnel, grows constantly smaller to the disappointing end; or a life that, like a cornucopia, continually enlarges with heaven's blessings? "Jesus answered them, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin." "If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." Did you ever hear or read the story of the Freiburg Organ? Years ago it was the custom of the organist first to show the visitors through the interesting cathedral, pointing out to them the beauties of arch and window and mural decoration. When

these wonders had been enjoyed, the organist would go into the organ loft; and, opening the organ and seating himself upon the organ bench, he would play a few simple strains in order that the marvelous beauty and sweetness of this rare instrument might be revealed. The story goes that among a company of visitors that one day came to the cathedral was a young man who seemed greatly to enjoy every beautiful thing. Finally, when the organist according to his custom started to go into the organ loft, the young man begged permission to accompany him, which permission was at last reluctantly granted. After the organist had played awhile, the young man laid his hand on his shoulder and said: "Please, sir, won't you let me play a little?" But the organist replied: "I am very sorry, sir, to disappoint you; but we never let any stranger even touch this organ. It is a very delicate, sensitive instrument. My father and I are the only ones who ever play upon it. If you enjoy the music so much, I will play for you a little longer." And the organist continued to play. But the young man was not satisfied, and again in pleading tones and in an intense manner he besought of the organist the privilege to play. "Please, sir, let me play just a little. I will not hurt the beautiful instrument. I understand organ-building, and love organs dearly. Let me play just a little! Please, sir, let me play!" Again the

organist refused, and again the young man pled. Finally, overcome by the persistency of his plea, the organist moved over to the end of the bench and said: "Well, if you must have it so, you may play just a little." The young stranger eagerly grasped the opportunity, and reverently seated himself at the organ. Making a few simple combinations he began softly and sweetly to play. Little by little he introduced other combinations and began to draw more and more upon the resources of the marvelous organ. The organist, who had intended that the stranger should be allowed to play only a few moments, forgot to stop him. Grander and still grander became the music until at last the old cathedral resounded with such heavenly harmonies as had never been heard there before. Finally, when the young man had finished, the organist, overcome with emotion threw himself at the feet of the stranger and said: "Oh, sir! Who are you? What is your name? I thought that I knew the possibilities of this organ; but I have never before heard such music as this! I thought that I knew how to play, but I see that I know nothing. Oh, sir! Who are you? What is your name?" And the young stranger answered: "Well, if you must know, I will tell you. My name is Felix Bartoldy Mendelssohn," at that time the greatest organist in Europe. Always after this whenever the organist had finished playing for visitors, he

would tell them the story that I have told you, and, with the tears streaming down his face, would then add: "Oh, you should have been here when Mendelssohn played! And just to think of it, I almost forbade Mendelssohn to play upon this organ!" And so it seems to me it is to-day. You and I sit at the key-board of life and think that we know how to play. At our side stands the great organist of the human soul, pleading with each one of us to entrust our life to Him. He himself made the organ. He surely will not harm it. He alone understands its wondrous possibilities. If you will entrust your life to Him, He will bring out of it heavenly harmonies. He will make it a prelude of praise, a symphony of service, an oratorio of blessing.

Come, oh Organist Divine,
And play upon this life of mine!
I have no part I'd keep from Thee;
I only pray: "Do Thou with me
As seemeth best in Thy clear sight:
What Thou dost will I know is right."

Cui Bono? A Study in Black and White

Matthew 16: 25, 26.—"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

CUI bono? for whose benefit? of what use?" is a question constantly asked in every practical age. It is right to ask it with reference to spiritual things. Christ himself laid down as the supreme test: "By their fruits you shall know them." He believed that all faiths should be thus tested. Christianity welcomes such an examination. Infidelity and agnosticism must submit to the same test. It hardly needs to be said that the time of trouble is the time of real testing, and that a faith that fails in a time of need is a faith hardly worthy of the attention of a rational being. I ask you, then, what do you gain from skepticism? What

advantage comes to any person from rejecting Christ and Christianity? There is time now only for a short study in black and white, only for a striking contrast between the darkness of hopelessness and the brightness of faith as illustrated in two well-known cases. It was in June, 1879, in the city of Washington. The brother of a well-known agnostic lay dead in his coffin. When both of the brothers had been alive a promise had been made that in case the death of one brother should precede that of the other, the remaining brother, if able, would deliver an address at the dead brother's funeral. And now true to his promise the living brother was present to deliver a carefully prepared address. An eye-witness thus describes the occasion. "As the living brother read his carefully-written address his voice became agitated, his form trembled, his emotion overcame him. Finally he put down his paper, and bowing his head upon the coffin gave vent to uncontrollable grief." Here let us stop a few moments respectfully in the presence of human woe. Let no one ever make sport of any fellow-mortal in trouble. Let us always remember the gallant order of that American officer who said, when thoughtless marines started to shoot at sinking Spanish sailors: "Don't shoot, boys; the poor fellows are drowning!" And yet we do well to learn from the experiences of others as well as from our own. The eye-witness con-

tinues to describe the scene: "When at last he was able to proceed, he raised himself up, and among other things that Colonel Ingersoll said," (for he was the living brother of whom we are speaking, and you will find among his published addresses this carefully prepared address which was read at his brother's funeral); "among other things that Colonel Ingersoll said on that occasion were these: 'Whether in mid-ocean or mid the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck must mark at last the end of each and all: and every life, no matter if its every hour be filled with love and every moment jeweled with a joy, will at last become a tragedy as sad and dark and deep as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death!' " (Note that from the point of view of the skeptic every life, even that of the most fortunate, "becomes sooner or later a tragedy as sad and dark and deep as can be woven out of the warp and woof of mystery and death." "Life," continued Mr. Ingersoll, "is a dark and barren vale between the cold and ice-clad peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We lift our wailing voices in the silence of the night, and hear no answer but the bitter echo of our cry." Could ever any words seem more sad and hopeless than these? And that too at such a time as that? Is this the best that skepticism can offer to a broken heart? Is there no gain in agnosticism? Is there no

balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Mr. Ingersoll continued his address; and before he closed he spoke of hope—hope, without which none can live and no one die—something about "hope trying to see some star, and listening for the rustle of an angel's wing." But Colonel Ingersoll saw no star of bright-eyed hope in the dark night of skepticism, nor did he hear the cheering rustle of any angel's wing. I ask you again what advantage is there from skepticism? What good comes to any one from the rejection of Christ? Does it make the happy and prosperous man a happier or more prosperous man? Has it any balm for a bleeding heart, or any medicine for a broken life? In sunshine or shade, by night or by day, is there any good in unbelief?

Take another scene. In Northfield, Mass., the body of the brother of a Christian lies in his coffin. The final services are being held in the village church. The exercises are about to close, when Mr. Moody, chief among the bereaved ones, arises; and, stepping forward to the side of the coffin, with a shining face, pours out his heart in gratitude to God for the life that his brother had lived; then, as tears of joy and sadness streamed down his face, tears which are like a telescope through which he seems to see again the vision that Stephen saw of an open heaven and Christ standing at the right hand of the Father, Mr. Moody speaks of the life and immortality

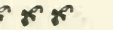
that the Savior brought to light. When he finishes speaking, the coffin is closed and carried to the cemetery, and lowered into the grave. Once more Mr. Moody feels impelled by the glorious hope that swells in his soul to speak, and standing by his brother's open grave, he cries out "Glory! Glory! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Take another scene. June, 1879, is followed by July, 1899, Colonel Ingersoll himself is dead. For days in his darkened home the hopelessly bereaved ones, a widow and two daughters, cling to the clay. . . . Again let us pause reverently at the sight of human woe. Dark hours are followed by darker hours; no gleam of light is anywhere to be seen. Oh! you who are in the enjoyment of a strong Christian hope, pity those who without God and without hope in the world sit sadly and silently beside the mortal remains of departed dear ones! . . . As the days pass by, friends suggest that some arrangement should be made for the funeral; but the bereaved ones will not hear to it. Hour by hour they sit silently beside their dead, having as their only consolation the lithographic copies of the hopeless addresses of him who had ruthlessly robbed wife and daughters of that which should have been at such a time their comfort and their stay. Finally it becomes absolutely necessary that the body should be removed. Cremation is the plan adopted, and

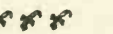
the body is taken to the crematory, where it is soon shoved into one of the two retorts. Mrs. Ingersoll and her two daughters are to wait from two o'clock until five o'clock when they will receive in a small urn the ashes of husband and father. The crematory authorities provide a good quartette and an organist, but the bereaved ones do not want the quartette to sing nor the organist to play. Did you ever hear of any songs of skepticism? Has agnosticism any songs? About what, pray, would they sing? The organ remains silent; the voices of the quartette are not heard. But look! Yonder comes another funeral procession! Another body is shoved into the remaining retort! And these people are Christians; they want the organ to play, and the quartette to sing: and the authorities dare not refuse. This makes it seem advisable to Mrs. Ingersoll and her two daughters to retire to a neighboring garden, from which even then they hear the songs of Christians, and in their own songless state wait for the ashes of their dead. In these two instances among many others skepticism showed its helplessness and its hopelessness; once when Robert Ingersoll stood by the side of the coffin of his brother with no word of comfort, and no anchor of hope; and again when Mrs. Ingersoll and her two daughters sat hopeless and comfortless in the stricken home of the brilliant leader of modern American agnosticism.

Take a final scene. July, 1899 is followed by December, 1899. Dwight L. Moody is approaching the end of his earthly life in the flesh. After forty years of service to God and to humanity he is called to go up higher. He is in the harness and in the possession of his full powers up to the very last month of life. As the earthly end approaches his faith of more than forty years grows even brighter, and he calmly says: "Earth recedes; Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go." Later on in a moment of revived strength he cries out: "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! I have been looking forward to it for years." And then, after a few words of thoughtful unselfishness for his family, his soul peacefully passes away. Which life is the better? The life of agnosticism and rejection of Christ, or the life of faith in and fellowship with him? Which life are *you* choosing?

The Temptations of Jesus



Hebrews 4:14-16.—"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."



SOME years ago a man deeply wounded my heart and aroused my mind by saying to me, "Jesus' temptations were not like ours. He could not really have been tempted to sin, nor could He have sinned if He had been so tempted. He was perfectly holy. He was the Son of God. How could He have been tempted to sin?" It was like a dagger thrust to me! Nothing at the time could have hurt me more, for certain terrible temptations were assaulting my soul most powerfully, and I had just be-

gun to learn to trust in the tempted but triumphant Christ; and now by a word, as it seemed to me, my great Savior had been taken away from me! The remark, however, drove me to my Bible afresh, and would not let me rest, until I had found out for myself whether these things were so. That the temptations of Jesus suggest difficulties no one who has thought at all upon the subject would wish to deny; yet there are certain indisputable facts and many helpful considerations that we should do well to keep in mind. Do you ask "How could Jesus Christ the Son of God have been tempted to sin?" Let us remember that he was also, as he loved most to call himself, the Son of man. Bear in mind that he was a real man, that "the word became flesh and tabernacles among us," that he who was "existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped" (to be eagerly retained and constantly asserted), "but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." It cannot be too constantly emphasized that Jesus was a real man. (a) He had a real human body. He was "born of a woman," "of the seed of Abraham and David," "in like manner with men partaking of flesh and blood," his flesh like our flesh, his blood like our blood. Bear in mind that he grew up as other children's bodies and minds grow "in wisdom

and in stature," that he was hungry, thirsty, weary, feeling the same kind of hunger, thirst and weariness that you and I feel. Bear in mind that he was susceptible to physical suffering and pain, sweating in his agony as it were great drops of blood, that he fainted beneath the cross, that he died and was buried. (b) Let us not forget, too, that he had a real, human, rational nature, that he had emotions of joy and grief, that he felt compassion and had displeasure, that he needed and practiced prayer. In all of the constitutional principles essential to human nature he was a real man. Indeed he was the only true, ideal, thoroughly real man that has ever lived; *magnificently human.*

Let us bear in mind also that the difficulty of conceiving how Christ could have been tempted to sin is really no greater than that in the case of Adam or of the first sinner whoever he was. The first person that sinned must have been tempted from innocence, when no bias sinward was in him. How he could have been tempted from the path of rectitude with no natural desire for sin in him is to us a mystery; but the facts seem to be clear. God surely could not have created sin, nor have created man with a sinful tendency in him. The first sinner, be he angel or human, must have abused his free moral agency and deliberately and of his own accord have chosen the wrong. That Christ, who was all his life through consciously a free moral agent, should have

been susceptible to temptation to sin is not then a wholly isolated or unthinkable case.

It is well to recall, also, that the more one studies the recorded temptations of Jesus in the light of Christ's ideas and purposes as the Messiah, in the light of the times in which he lived, and in the light of his work as a Savior, the more the idea of the reality of his temptations, and that too of the very temptations specifically recorded, appears reasonable. Indeed, as has often been said by many eminent and reverent students of his life, if we had no record of such temptations in his life we should be compelled to suppose that some such conflict must have taken place.

Let us suppose for a moment the contrary, i. e. that Christ's temptations to sin never took place, or, if they did take place, that they were not real temptations, then what? (a) Then Christ's life was not a sincere, real, human life, but a make-believe, a sham. He was playing a part. He who so unsparingly denounced the acting, the make-believe, of the hypocritical Pharisees was in that case the arch-actor of all time, the biggest hypocrite of the ages. He led his disciples to believe that he was terribly tempted, that he needed and hence practiced prayer, that he struggled until drops of blood stood out upon his flesh and fell like rain to the ground. I say it again, if Christ's temptations to sin were not real temptations, then he was

a great and a gross deceiver. For it is now quite generally agreed among students that the disciples' knowledge of the facts of this first great series of temptations of Jesus, which took place when he was alone in the wilderness, must have been given to them by Jesus himself. He would most probably have communicated these earlier facts to them during one of those later conflicts, when it was desirable to explain to them why he refused to become the wonder-worker that the expectant multitude wanted; or why he did not leap from some temple pinnacle and by that spectacular feat commonly looked for from the Messiah prove at once the reality of his claims; or why he did not become the political leader they desired, and by sword and revolutionary measures quickly conquer the world. Surely as the Son of God he had the power. And was not the whole world promised by many a scripture passage to the Messiah? Let him by a strategic move seize the throne; then he could successfully and at once confer upon all mankind the blessings which were his and which he was yearning to bestow. Perhaps it was at such an hour that Jesus told his disciples of that early and terribly real conflict with sin and Satan in the wilderness, after his baptism and at the very dawn of his public ministry. These temptations, which in their very intensity must have taken place in the depths of Christ's own soul, may have been introduced to him by external,

visible circumstances and agencies. At any rate when they were described by Jesus to his disciples they were characteristically described by him in picture form, which was the only adequate way by which such a terribly real soul conflict could be set forth to men of that age and kind. That these temptations to sin were real and terrible he would not have them for a moment doubt. Christ was a true man and his life was a real life; terribly real; tremendously real; tragically real.

(b) Again, if the temptations of Jesus were not real temptations to sin, and if there never was the slightest possibility that he should swerve an iota from the path of rectitude, then the great glory of his obedience is gone, the indescribable charm of his sinlessness is destroyed, and the tremendous drawing power of his moral excellence is surely lost. Compulsory virtue is no virtue at all. Mere innocence is not moral manhood; it may be simply the result of favorable circumstances. But innocence maintained in the presence of real temptation is praiseworthy. How could Jesus glory in his sinlessness, if he could not have acted otherwise? What is the force of his claim "I do always those things that please Him," if he had no possible choice in the matter? But the possession of choice implies the possibility of contrary action. Why should Paul boast of the mind of Christ, who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even unto the death

of the cross? Why should he make so much of an obedience which led to an heavenly exaltation "wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name?" Most beautifully has F. B. Meyer pictured that Transfiguration scene "as a time when the gates of heaven opened before the vision of Jesus in the mountain, and the glory which he had with the Father before the worlds were shone full upon him and around him, and he heard the angelic anthems of the hosts above. Was it no temptation to him to return to his glory and avoid the sorrows and trials that awaited him? But he steadfastly turned his back upon it all, and took hold of the rail of the will of God, and followed the path of obedience down the mountain side, down into the depths of Gethsemane, down through the valley of humiliation with its scourging and buffeting and mocking, down, down, down, 'obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.'" Oh, my brethren, wherein lies the pathos and sublimity of the cross, except that, when he might have asked for the ten legions of angels, he did not? When they mockingly said, "Come down from the cross," he voluntarily chose to remain upon it. Not the nails, but love held him fast; love for you and for me. That's why we love him so. Was it not his boast "I lay my life down of myself. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it again. No man

taketh it from me"? Could he not have saved himself from the cross, and was it not only after a terrible struggle in Gethsemane that he said, "Not my will, but thine be done"? He resisted every temptation to swerve from the path of obedience and wrought out in his life perfect obedience to the will of God, even under the most trying circumstances. Blessed be his name!

(c) Again, if the temptations of Jesus were not real temptations, Christ cannot be in any practical and helpful sense an example for us. If his holiness and moral excellence were his by nature and cost him no moral labor and conflict, if his life was lived under conditions so radically different from ours, then what comfort is there in the invitation and injunction, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls"? As Dr. Westcott has said, "Unless the Son of God truly became man the incarnation cannot be the revelation of human duties." If Jesus is the model man, and his life a pattern for us to follow here upon earth, that life must have been lived under truly human conditions, subject to such temptations as try us. The very highest conception of life possible is that of a discipline; he only is a hero who has overcome. Indeed the rewards of heaven are only "to him that overcometh," and He is the first fruits, "the first among many brethren."

(d)) Not only because his life was a real life, and because it was one of praiseworthy obedience and a model for us, but also because of his very Saviorhood it was necessary that his trials and temptations should have been real trials and temptations. This is one of the leading thoughts in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that most helpful treatise upon the brotherhood of Christ. One essential feature of his high-priestly work, of his Saviorhood, lies in the fact that he himself was personally and thoroughly fitted through temptation and trial to understand and to sympathize with and help the tempted win the victory over sin. It seemed best to God thus to perfect the captain of our salvation. "It behooved him," it was necessary for him, "to become in all respects like unto his brethren in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to help those that are tempted." Or, again, as in our text, "For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is only such a Savior, that can be truly touched with our infirmities and can really help us in every time of need. It was necessary that he who came to save human beings should partake, not of the nature of angels, but of ordinary, human nature, human nature subject to a life of discipline

and evil temptations, lying under the malignant hate and subject to the bitter attack of the evil one. It was highly fitting, too, that this woman's seed, who should bruise the serpent's head, should himself feel the full force of the Fiend's power, and have this mighty and victorious conflict at the very beginning of his saving ministry. How else would he know experimentally the strength of his antagonist, or his own power to defeat him? How else should humanity through the ages be assured of the Savior's power to give victory over sin to those who would trust him? Was it at all probable that the forces of evil should see their kingdom in danger and do nothing to protect their interests? (It is to be remembered, too, that these assaults upon Jesus were renewed time and again throughout his whole life and ministry; when the devil left him, as Luke says, it was only "for a season.")

For these, and other reasons that might be presented, it seems impossible to doubt the reality of the temptations of Jesus, which could not have been real apart from the possibility of contrary action. It is manifest from the New Testament records that the early Christians never doubted the reality of the human life of Jesus in all of its phases. They were too close to it to doubt it. But, when the development of dogma and creed became in later centuries the chief concern of the church, an undue emphasis laid upon the divinity of Christ led to an obscuration

of his real humanity; a mistaken attempt to safeguard the doctrine of his sinlessness led to a declaration of his inability to sin; and the coming to the front of the doctrine of absolute foreordination destroyed his freedom of choice. Thus, as Dr. Van Dyke has suggested, was the human Christ eclipsed by dogma, the church was robbed of God manifest in the flesh, and in the desperate demand for a human mediator a human was deified and the intercession and worship of the Virgin Mary began. But it is the glory of modern times that we have rediscovered in our thinking Jesus of Nazareth. Never since the days of his tempted but triumphant sinless life upon earth and the days of his immediate followers in the early church have we been so face to face with the Christ of Palestine as today. Comparatively little interest is taken in systematic theology, in dogma, today; but all life is tremulous with a profound interest in Jesus of Nazareth. Any book about the Christ sells by the thousands. Art, again the hand-maid of religion, has felt the pulse of the times; and a Tissot paints the human Christ, with no supernatural halo about his head, but one of whom the people said, "Is not this Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter?" And these pictures will never loose their interest, so long as humanity cries out for a tempted but sinless, a tried but victorious, Elder Brother.

Omitting now necessarily the consideration of

many minor matters which interestingly gather about this most real and terrible and decisive battle of the ages, let us note briefly but reverently how subtle these recorded temptations of Jesus were and how typical of the many temptations which assail us today. The first temptation, to turn the stones into bread, was, we think, not without its subtle attractiveness to Jesus at this time. He was alone in the wilderness, gnawed with the pangs of hunger. Jesus was no John the Baptist; he was no ascetic by nature; he found no holiness in discomfort. Jesus was a social man. He knew himself now without doubt to be the Messiah, possessed of extraordinary powers; how should he use them? They were surely given to him for use. Was there anything sinful in the natural cravings of the body for food? What harm in supplying by the use of the powers God had given him these natural wants? Surely God would not do for him what he could do himself. Who could possibly be harmed by such action on his part away out here alone in the wilderness? Upon the surface the suggestion seemed in itself perfectly harmless; but inside the sugar-coated pill was the poison of selfishness and sin. Indeed one of the mighty problems of his life was here brought before him. Should he always wait God's will and way? God's Spirit had led him there, would he not guide and care for him? Should Jesus use the special powers given him for

service upon his own initiative and for his own ease and comfort? Or should he consecrate all to God, and follow in His path, whatever the cost? Should he here begin to learn how to say amid the work of Messiahship, though that work led to a cross, "Not my will but Thine be done"? Or should he put his own comfort first and at the extreme moment later on call for the ten legions of angels to save him from Pilate and the Jews? Just for a moment the evil suggestion came, then Jesus spurned it with the whole force of his sturdy soul. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Trust in God and do His will. This is the great duty; first, last and always.

And are there any of us to whom this subtle temptation has not come in some form or other, at some time or other? Have we never been tempted to put our own comfort before duty, not to say the flesh before the spirit? Never tempted to hesitate between selfishness and self-sacrifice? Never tempted to put bread before obedience to God? Tempted to act as if we could live by bread alone? How many modern Israelites in the wilderness have been tempted to complain and long for the onions and garlic of Egypt? Christ, conscious of power, was confronted with one of the most searching of questions, "How shall I use this power?" Young business man, you are becoming conscious of the power

to make money, how are you going to use that power? Honestly or dishonestly? Selfishly to cut a career, or unselfishly to fulfill a mission? For yourself, or for God and your fellowmen? Young college graduate, man or woman, how are you going to use your superior knowledge? Are you going to forge ahead of others less fortunate and manifest your superiority? Or burn yourself out in paying to God and to humanity the debt you owe for your opportunities and advantages? Physicians, nurses, lawyers, teachers, all are confronted with this searching question. Capitalists, conscious of the power of wealth, how are you to use your power? Organized labor, just beginning to be conscious of your power, how will you use it? Christ won out against this most subtle temptation. He will help each one of us win a similar victory.

The second temptation, that about casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, was very subtle also, and was not, I think, without its attractiveness to Jesus. It appeared in other forms also later in his experiences. His life work as Messiah must be done among a sign-loving, sign-expecting, sign-demanding people. Their constant cry was to be, "Shew us a sign, and we'll believe you." They had a popular saying that the Messiah would suddenly appear descending from on high into the temple area. "Why not do it? Thou art the Messiah; thou hast decided

to trust God under all circumstances; trust him now to the full, make this spectacular descent into the temple, and all is thine own. Be the wonder-worker that the people want. Why not? Thou hast the power; thou canst not succeed unless thou winnest thine own people; thou canst not win them so easily in any other way. Why not do it? There can be no possible harm in doing it. But beneath the surface of the suggestion Jesus looked, and saw that the sudden and the spectacular was not God's way to the realization of the kingdom. It was, to be sure, one way to reach a goal; but it was not the Father's way, nor the Father's goal. It meant essentially a presumptuous trust in God, thinking it certain God would adopt this way. Again, with all the intensity of his nature, Jesus spurned the suggestion with the words of Scripture, "Thou shalt not tempt (or make trial of) the Lord thy God." Trust Him we may, and trust Him fully when we are in the path of His appointment; but we must not presume upon Him, and insist that our own plan shall be chosen.

Again note how typical is this temptation to those that come to us today. How much religious performing there is which results largely in self glorification rather than to the honor of God! How much sensational preaching and spectacular service that does little to hide God's truth in men's hearts and really and permanently to advance Christ's kingdom! How much that is transient and external! Who of

preachers, evangelists, or Christian workers, has not felt the temptation to stand upon his head or do some strange temple performance to get the crowd? And is there no presumptuous trust in God today? Do people ever make definite, cast-iron plans without consulting God at all, and then pray "Lead us and prosper us"? Do they go day by day into evil company and places of known hostility to Christ, do they practice constantly known sin, and then piously pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"? Do people expose their health, or take no sane means to recover health and strength, and then ask God for it? Do people live lazily, or extravagantly, or carelessly breaking the laws of prosperity, and then blame God for a lack of success? Do you? Have you ever been tempted to do any of these things? Christ got the victory here too, and he will help us win against all the spectacular and presumptuous.

The third temptation, when the devil said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou will bow down and worship me," was specially subtle and typical. It has never been hard even for the very best of men to half believe that this is the devil's world, and that to get along successfully in it one must not fight him too hard. And especially when men have had a high and noble purpose to win the world in order to bless it, it has not been hard to believe that the end justifies the means. Christ's idea of Messiahship

and of the kingdom of God were so contrary to those of the Jewish people of those times: to insist upon internal righteousness and a spiritual world wide kingdom would be to invite certain failure, to bring about his utter rejection by his own people and to completely crush his hopes. Let him compromise a little, lower his standard for a time until he could win the people and establish his kingdom, and then he could gradually work up toward his ideals. Why not let the eager people make him a political king? Why not take the sword and sweep the world? What Jesus could have thus accomplished is only hinted at by what Mahomet accomplished five centuries later. But Jesus had now thoroughly consecrated himself to the Father's will, to the Father's way, and to the Father's kingdom; and again he spurned with all his might what he so clearly saw would be a bowing down to the devil, "Get thee hence Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." How typical this climax of temptations is to those that assail us today! Have any of us ever been tempted to half believe that this is the devil's world and that it is of real advantage to keep on good terms with him? Have we never been tempted to compromise with evil? to get gain, perhaps great gain, in power, position, wealth, by just a little yielding to sin? to put policy in the place of principle? This is the temptation to which

almost all ambitious, selfseeking people sooner or later succumb. Editors, lawyers, doctors, teachers, preachers, merchants, clerks, young and old, men and women, in all sorts of occupations and positions, who of us has not felt its subtle power? The devil offered Jesus the whole world, but most people who can be bought at all are willing to sell out much more cheaply. Judas sold out for $18.60, and there are many today who are willing to sell eternity for time, soul for body, character for reputation, integrity for honor, manhood for money. Christ alone can help us get the victory over these terrible assaults. He can keep us true. Specially subtle and powerful is this temptation when the cause in which one is interested is a noble one, a sacred one. How many questionable things, not to say crimes, have been justified upon the Jesuitical principle that the end justifies the means! The devil has always been the author and ardent expounder of this principle. Suppose you have not gotten your position honestly, nor used it honestly, suppose you do compromise with evil, are you not using all your earnings for a good purpose? To support a needy mother or sick sister, wife or children? Do you not give liberally of your earnings to the church or to charity? How many questionable money raising methods have been endorsed even by good people because it was "For the church" or "For sweet charity's sake"! Who of us has not felt the power of this temptation in some

form or other, at some time or other? What a master devil he is! But he met his more than master in Jesus Christ, and this same Jesus will give those who trust in him a similar victory.

Let us note now two helpful considerations that may be drawn from the reality of these temptations of Jesus. (1) It is no sin to be tempted. He, whose sinlessness has never been successfully questioned, was subjected to the severest temptations that mortal ever endured. He, who prayed for the forgiveness of others, and taught all men to pray "Forgive us our debts," yet never was conscious of any sin nor ever prayed for forgiveness for himself, was tempted all along the journey of life and "in all points like as we are." It is no sin to be tempted. On the contrary, temptation is a necessary part of a disciplinary life. Life is a training school and our trials and temptations are often our best teachers. Let us never forget that in all three of the Gospel narratives of Christ's great temptations it is distinctly stated that Jesus was led up by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, Matthew putting the case very boldly by adding "to be tempted of the devil." It may be that never is God so surely and wisely leading us as when we are passing through some trying time when temptations make sore assaults upon us. Surely it is only through struggle that strength is acquired, and out of conflict the deepest convictions come. And so James

writes, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations, knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." It is only through many temptations and trials that we can be tempered and made strong for service. And so God often brings us into and through places where we are most severely tested and where on all sides seductions lurk and allure. We are not to rush into places of peril, nor rashly go where temptations will assault. We naturally dread such testings, and need to recognize clearly our weakness, our peril, their strength, and our source of victory: and for these and other reasons we are taught to pray "Lead us not into temptation." Not that God ever, in the bad sense of the word temptation, is the author of evil, or tries to make us do wrong (for as James says, "God tempteth no man"); but he does test us, and in these trying times Satan is very apt to put forth his supreme efforts to drag us down. God tests us to temper us and make us strong, to help us. The devil tempts us in the hope of destroying us. Let us not, then, allow ourselves to be discouraged by the fact that life is full of temptations. Indeed, it is far better to be tempted often than never to be tempted at all. The devil's opposition and hate are preferable to the devil's friendship. There is much comfort in the thought

that one is considered worth the wooing. Men do not try to steal counterfeit coin, nor does the devil need to use many temptations to win some people. Were you free from his assaults it might be evidence that he was satisfied to have you remain as you are. We never feel the strength of the current when we are wholly going with the stream. There must be some good in us yet, when the devil still pursues. Instead of saying "How bad I am and must be to be so sorely tempted"; let us rather be reminded "How malignant is the devil's hate! How severe is the stress of life! And yet how much greater than all of my temptations and needs is my mighty Savior!" "Lord, deliver us from evil!" It is not God's wish that we should be without temptations, but it is Christ's constant intercessory prayer that we should triumph in his name. "Father, I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." When bridge builders are constructing a bridge they subject the structure to the severest tests, not that they wish to break it down but to prove it trustworthy. So God tries and tempers us for service, even as Jesus went out from this wilderness experience into a sympathetic and helpful ministry among tempted men and women.

A second consideration that ought to help us is that no one in this world who comes into moral, responsible life does or can escape having tempta-

tions. It is a great mistake to classify people, as we often consciously or unconsciously do, as the tempted or untempted. All morally responsible people are tempted; old and young, rich and poor, sick and well, educated and uneducated, men and women, country folks as well as city folks, those in solitude as well as those in society. How real life becomes when we keep in mind that in every heart there is a battle raging! We are so well acquainted with our own temptations and trials, and know so little, and perhaps care to know so little, of others' struggles, that we are apt to be discouraged at times and think that no one else is so severely tempted as we. We are making a great mistake! Every heart has its own bitterness; every soul its own burden; every life its own battle. How much more tender and thoughtful we would be in all our words and ways if we should say within ourselves, "Perhaps this one to whom I am now talking, or by whom I am now sitting, or this one whose life is now being so unconsciously moved by mine for good or ill, is having some severe temptation in the heart at this very moment! Behind the smiling face may be a struggling soul, how can I help him? God help him!" How much more charitable we would be in all of our criticisms and judgments, if we should remember more constantly that all people are tempted, most of them terribly tempted! One reason, doubtless, why we are com-

manded by Jesus "Judge not" is because our harsh and hasty judgments are so often based upon a too scanty knowledge of the facts in the case. Oh, if we only knew, as He alone knows, what a battle that soul has had; we'd think very differently! Even when it seems clear that one has fallen in the fight and been overcome by evil, even then as Robert Burns suggested, no one of us knows "how much of evil that one's resisted." Nor are the temptations of life confined to any place or occupation or age. Those who live tempted lives in the city are apt to think, "Oh, if only I could live in the country away from these awful sights and sounds, I should be free from temptation." But other temptations would meet you in the country. Adam was tempted in a Garden, and Jesus found temptations awaiting him in a wilderness. They are everywhere in some form or other. Men and women have so often thought that, if only they could get away from the crowded streets of life, they would cease to be tempted, but monks and nuns have found it otherwise. A St. Anthony, or a St. Francis of Assisi, a Luther, or a modern recluse, all have found that the temptations of closet and cloister are quite as severe as the trials of society. Don't envy your pastors or preachers and think them exempt from temptations! There are no immunes in this probationary life. Their temptations may not take the same form as yours but they are no

less real. You have yours; I have mine: Christ alone can give us both the victory. Nor is any period of life without its temptations. Popular sentiment is often wrong here. We too often think of youth as the only time of severe temptation. It is indeed a critical and trying time, a time of far-reaching decisions; but let us not forget to pray for the smaller boys and girls, they have their struggles, too. How many are the temptations of young manhood and of young womanhood! How many assaults come, too, in comfortable middle life! What temptations to give up the ideals of other days, to be content with past achievements, to cease to grow! And who will say that old age has no temptations? What grave mistakes and sad wrecks have occurred even at the end of a long life! It is no sin to be tempted, nor is it possible for morally responsible beings in any place, occupation, or condition, to escape temptation; but we have in the tried but triumphant Christ, whose temptations were so real, so subtle, and so typical, just the Savior that tempted souls need. "Not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help *us* in time of need."

Thankfulness*

Ephesians 5:18-20.—"*And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.*"

IF we were to study the subject of prayer, as it is illustrated by the prayers of the Bible, we should be impressed with the thought that there must be, either expressed or implied, five elements in all true prayer; and that these elements too will occur in the same general order. There will be first an ascription of praise and thanksgiving to God. This is most fitting on the part of a helpless creature coming into the pres-

* Ever since I gave my life to Christ I have been trying to emphasize by life and song and sermon the duty and the privilege of thankfulness. During the last ten years, while life has been lived in a wheel-chair, I have considered it to be an especial privilege and duty to speak upon this pleasant theme. Surely the Father grants to those of us, whose lives are in the world's view so broken and saddened, a dark background upon which we can the more easily present the thought of Christian cheerfulness.

ence of a benevolent Creator; or of a dependent son addressing a provident Heavenly Father. Then there will follow an humble confession of sin. This surely will rush to the lips of him who has any conception at all of the heinousness of sin, of his own faults and failings, and of the holiness of God. Then, thirdly, there will be a pleading of God's promises, which promises are the basis of approach unto God, and an encouragement to faith. Then there will follow a recalling of past mercies and blessings received, which still further will stimulate faith. And lastly there will be definite and persistent petition. A fine example of such prayer, where these five elements are clearly manifest, is found in the first chapter of the wonderful book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah's prayer when his heart was burdened for Jerusalem.

One very important element in true prayer we are apt to overlook, or to slight, the element of praise and thankfulness. We have almost forgotten how to cry "Hallelujah!" "Praise ye the Lord!" And yet the spirit of true prayer and of true praise go ever hand in hand. It matters little whether you call the world's great song book "The Prayers of David" or "The Psalms of David"; for praise and prayer are sisters. Therefore Paul writes to the Colossians, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving"; and to the Philippians, "With

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." We do not so often fail in our asking as in our thanking. We are in danger of becoming a family of beggars. Our prayers and our lives are in danger of being sadly marred and scarred by a lack of gratitude. Our prayers and our lives are in danger of losing much of their sweetness and their power through a minimum of praise; life thus becomes warped and selfish, displeasing to God and powerless with men. We have an annual Thanksgiving Day in our national calendar. Nationally and personally it may be a curse to us, or a blessing. If we take advantage of the custom to live a life of fussing and complaining for three hundred and sixty-four days of the year, or three hundred and sixty-five days if it happens to be leap-year; and then soothe to sleep an already drowsy conscience by tacking on an appendix of gratitude to our Thanksgiving Day prayer, only to spend the rest of the day in gormandizing or dissipation, the day will be a hindrance to us rather than a help. But if the presence of such a day in our personal or national calendar will cause us to stop and think of our many blessings and our ill-desert, and will help us to cultivate the spirit of gratitude and to live more thankful lives, then the day will always be to us a personal as well as a national blessing.

Not only is thankfulness an important element in all true prayer, but it is also to be noted that

men and women who are pre-eminent for real piety are pre-eminent for praise. A few examples from biblical history will make this abundantly evident. Moses was a man of true piety. He was pre-eminent in praise. All through his long and useful life he kept setting up memorials of God's mercies, and emphasized the importance of the festivals of thanksgiving. The whole book of Deuteronomy is largely made up of Moses' great thanksgiving addresses, given at the close of his life, when he lovingly recounted and called upon the people to "remember all the way that the Lord" their God had led them. David, the man after God's own heart, was pre-eminent for praise. Of all Old Testament characters he seems most near to the majority of us, because of the wide diversity of his experiences. David had such a checkered career; touched life at so many points; seemed so human. Like his greater Son, he was tempted and tried in all points like as we are, and so in some experience of his life he resembles every other life. And yet, during all of the varied experiences of his varied life, we find him to be a man of song and praise. No matter when his psalms may have been written; in the seclusion and quiet of his shepherd hours; or when he was the favorite at the court of the king; or when he was fleeing as a refugee from the wrath of Saul; or when he was at the height of his power as king over all

Israel; or when his own sin and family troubles were bringing him in sorrow to his grave; in every hour of his life he finds some occasion for gratitude, and sings in almost every psalm, "Praise ye the Lord." Yes, in spite of all his failings, in many ways David was the man after God's own heart; penitent for his sin, aspiring toward the best, thankful at all times. Daniel, too, pre-eminent for piety, was pre-eminent for praise. Even when an exile and captive in victorious Babylon, three times a day even at the risk of his life, he opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and upon his knees "prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime" (i. e., as was his custom).

When we turn to New Testament times we find in the lives of Jesus, and of his faithful pupil, Paul, remarkable illustration of the same truth, that true piety and praise go hand in hand. All through the life of Jesus, a life of sorrow, loneliness and hardest toil and trial, there runs a glad theme of thanksgiving and praise; so that even under the shadow of the cross he cries out exultantly, "I thank Thee, O Father." In the life of Paul also we have a splendid illustration of the habit of thankfulness in all of the varied circumstances of life. For Paul, like David, had a very checkered career. Joy and sorrow, health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, the love of friends and the hatred

of foes, all were a part of his lot. As he himself wrote to the Philippians, "I know how both to be abased and to abound, . . . both to be full and to be hungry." Paul tasted almost every experience possible in the whole gamut of human trial. Listen to his own list as given in 2 Cor. 11:23-28: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself.) I more; in labours more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." And yet everywhere we find a ringing note of praise in all of Paul's life. His letters, written, some on the second missionary tour, some on the third missionary tour, some in the time of the first Roman imprisonment and some between two imprisonments or during a second imprisonment about to end in execution—his letters usually begin with thanks-

giving and end with praise. Indeed the customary Pauline introduction is a salutation and then a paragraph of gratitude. "I thank my God always." If some people should talk to us about the duty of thankfulness, we should be tempted to say to them, "It's very easy for you to think and speak thus; for you have never had any very hard trials; life for you has always been rather smooth and pleasant." But when Paul, a man of so many troubles and such varied experiences, speaks of the duty and privilege of gratitude, we ought surely to give heed to him. Do you recall one of his experiences on his second missionary tour? It was at Philippi. Paul had scarcely recovered from his illness in Galatia. A divine call was heard from Macedonia, to which Paul, with Silas and other companions, had gladly responded. As they went to and fro in this important European town, they were often harassed by a demonized slave girl, who was very valuable to her heathen masters. When the slave girl continued for many days to annoy the apostles, Paul turned about and in the name of Jesus Christ commanded the evil spirit to come out of her. That very hour she was cured. "When her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates." After a very hasty and riotous trial, Paul and Silas were con-

demned to be beaten. You understand, of course, what this meant. The back was made bare, the condemned person was bent forward till every muscle was strained to its severest tension, hands having been made secure to a post. Then two strong soldiers, sometimes with rods, sometimes with pieces of rope in which were intertwined pieces of metal or glass, scourged the condemned upon the back; blow after blow laying bare the flesh to the bone. Sometimes people died under the severity of the lashing After a terrible beating, Paul and Silas were thrust into the inner prison, and their feet were made fast in the stocks. The inner prison was a dark, damp, dirty, dreary dungeon. The stocks, keeping the body in a fixed and uncomfortable position, added greatly to their trial. And then do you remember how Paul and Silas about midnight, some hours after the awful beating, when festering wounds and strained and tortured muscles were specially painful, began to complain bitterly of their hard trials, and of fate; of the wickedness and worthlessness of men, and of their pains? No! No! it does not read so in my Bible. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." And they sang too so loudly and lustily that the prisoners heard them, and doubtless felt the power of such living. And now again Paul is a prisoner; and from his prison-house, he writes that wonderful song out of sorrow, the

sweet love-letter to the Philippians. From this same prison-house, he writes to the Colossians of the sufficiency of Christ. From this same prison-house, he writes to the Ephesians in the words of the text, "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Surely Paul has a right to be heard, when he speaks to us of the privilege and duty of gratitude.

And all down through the history of the Christian church, you will find examples of the truth that true prayer and true piety go hand in hand with praise. Indeed a complaining Christian is a paradox, a contradiction in terms. Theoretically and ideally this is true; yet in reality we find many professing Christians whose lives are filled with murmuring and complaining, with fussing and grumbling. Many seem to have forgotten Paul's injunction to the Philippians: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as luminaries, holding forth the word of life." It would be of great advantage both to the church and to the world if some Christians would move

at once off from Grumble Street on to Thanksgiving Avenue. David said, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." Let us think for a season of some reasons why we ought to cultivate the habit of gratitude:

1. We ought to cultivate the habit of gratitude because it is the proper thing to do. When we remember that "every good giving and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning"; when we recall how many and manifold mercies have been and are being continually showered upon us, undeserving of them as we are; we ought surely to recognize that gratitude felt and expressed is an eminently fitting and proper thing on our part. Though we were created in the image and likeness of God and made to rule, though man has a dignity and destiny nobler far than all other creatures, yet he is born into this world as one of the most helpless of all animals. The young of the lower animals somehow survive the most unfavorable conditions; but the baby man is so weak and so helpless that he is absolutely dependent upon parents or friends for the first few years of existence. When we become older and stronger we are apt to forget these things. We get proud. And yet, of what has such an inconsistent, weak, sinning one as man to be proud? Surely the recipient of so

many undeserved blessings ought to be thankful. In business lines or social walks, whenever we receive a favor, we acknowledge it by a receipt or a note of thanks. Should we not be as business-like and civil in respect to favors received from God? Common decency and courtesy would seem to demand it. Surely to receive a favor is to incur an obligation, and that obligation at the least is an obligation of gratitude. It was held by the Jews that "he who partakes of anything without giving thanks acts as if he were stealing it from God." If in the twilight of revelation the Jews recognized this truth, what shall be said of professed Christians who live kicking and complaining lives; Christians, so called, some of whom do not even have a blessing at the table? No true Jew ever omitted the table blessing. Jesus always gave thanks. Is it any wonder that Christ, when he had healed the ten lepers, and only one had returned to thank him for it, sadly asked, "Where are the nine?" "To be thankful" means really "to be thinkful," "to confess the facts," to acknowledge the truth. For decency's sake we ought to be grateful.

2. We ought to cultivate the habit of gratitude, because it is most pleasing to God. True parenthood in man must be more or less of a true shadow of parenthood in God. And that which pleases or displeases true earthly parents, must be analogous to what is pleasing or displeasing to

the Heavenly Parent. If this is so, let me ask you: O father; O mother; what is it in your child that is most pleasing, what most painful to you? In your life of devotion and self-sacrifice for those whom God has given you, does any sword cut with a keener blade, or thrust with more poignant steel, than the sword of ingratitude? Is anything more distressing in the home life than the presence of a thankless child? Does anything so wear upon the human heart as lack of true appreciation? Some years ago in the town of M——, in Ohio, I met a woman with a heavily burdened heart. She told me that her husband was paralyzed, and that she wished I might see him, and try to cheer him. At the time I was in a hospital and unable to get to him. He, however, could walk with one cane; and, as electric cars passed his door and mine, it was arranged that he was to call upon me. In a day or two he did so. During the first few minutes of our interview, he swore at almost everything imaginable, and in almost every way imaginable. When he had relieved himself in this fashion I asked him if he felt any better for it. I had tried almost everything for paralysis, but had never tried cursing. Perhaps he could recommend it as a helpful treatment. But no, with all of his swearing, he had not helped himself any, and could not recommend the habit. And then I asked him to tell me all about his paralysis. I saw that I could

not reach him from the religious point of view, and thought I would try another plan. I induced him to tell me all about his condition, his ability and his disability; and when he had finished his story, I told mine. I did what I do not often do, I gave him every detail of a dark picture. I did not overdraw it. I told it just as it was. When I had finished my story, I thought Tom (for that was his name) would straighten up, cheer up, and say, "Well, if you can be cheerful, contented and grateful in such a condition, I can in my condition; for I can walk some and get about, but you must be carried." It was my earnest hope that Tom would make such a resolve, and that our visit would be of permanent benefit; but, alas, I didn't know Tom. When I had finished my story, instead of cheering up and bracing up, Tom knitted his brow and said: "Ugh! That's tough! I suppose I'll be that way some day!" Now what could one do to cheer such a person as that, a person who would always look upon the dark side of things? A person who would not only continually complain of present trials, but would spend the time in anticipating possible worse ones? Some days afterwards I saw again Tom's wife, and I said to her, "My dear woman, what is it in your life that is continually wearing upon you, that whitens your hair and writes wrinkles on your brow? What is it that is breaking your health so? Is it because Tom is par-

alyzed? Is it because you have so much hard work to do?" "Oh," she said, "it isn't because Tom is paralyzed. It isn't because of the work. When I married Tom he was well and strong. Everything was bright and fair. But I married him for weal or woe, for better or worse. It isn't because Tom is paralyzed. It isn't because of the work. I love him. I loved him when he was strong and well. I love him none the less now. It's a pleasure to wait upon him and help him. Don't you know what a woman means when she says 'I love him'? Ah, no, it isn't because Tom's paralyzed. But Tom don't do as he once did. He was once so grateful and appreciative. He seems now to take for granted everything I do for him. He seems to forget to say 'Thank you.'" "But," said I, "Tom told me only a few days ago that he had the best wife in town." "Ah," she said—and I can see now the trembling of her form, the twitching of the muscles of the face, and the tears chasing each other down her cheeks —"he hasn't told me that for a long time; not for a long time." And when I saw Tom I told him how his wife was starving for gratitude.

And I want to say to you, O husband: what your wife needs to cheer her heart and make glad her home and yours, is not electric lights, not a new dress, or a new bonnet, so much as it is for you to be as gallant and grateful and appreciative of her, as you were when you were a

young lover, or were in the first years of wedded life. Grateful appreciation will do more to make her step light, to keep her face bright and her heart full of sunshine and cheer than almost any other one thing. And, O wife: to you, too, a similar message comes. Nothing will do more to cheer and inspire and brace a hard working and heavily burdened husband than the sweet appreciation, felt and expressed, of a true, grateful wife. And here also I see before me many bright boys and girls who are beloved by parents and who indeed love their parents. But, boys and girls, sometimes you forget. Who is it that provides the beautiful ribbons and bright dresses, the balls and bats, the school-books, pencils and papers, etc.? Why, when I was a boy, we used an old broken piece of a slate; and with a rag and in an unmentionable way we cleaned our broken slates. But the doctors have said that rags and sponges and slates must go, and now you have pencils and paper and tablets; and every few weeks you must have new books. Boys and girls!

"You are the heirs of all the ages
In the foremost files of Time."

You have almost everything. But, under God, to whom are you indebted for all of these blessings? Generally to a hard working, faithful father, or a self-sacrificing, patient mother, or to both. And, boys and girls, nothing will so please your father

and mother as your gratitude expressed in obedient and faithful lives, and in words of love and thankfulness. When we go from here to our homes, let us all turn over a new leaf, and begin to cultivate the habit of more freely expressing our gratitude. Now, if this is pleasing in human relationships, it is most surely well-pleasing to God. One of the awful charges brought against the heathen world, in that remarkable first chapter of Romans, is that "knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks." God, I believe, hungers for, and delights in the expressed gratitude of his creatures.

3. We ought to cultivate a thankful spirit, because it will produce in us humility and industry. One of the things which God hates is pride. In all parts of Scripture it receives the severest condemnation. On the other hand God is said to have two thrones, one in the heights of heaven, the other in the humble heart: for Isaiah says, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." And the psalmist says, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." And again, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And both James and Peter tell us, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace

to the humble." Jesus, too, the only time he ever defined his heart-life, said, "For I am meek and lowly in heart." If we desire, then, to cultivate and acquire more of this desirable humility, let us cultivate the spirit of gratitude, for gratitude and humility go hand in hand. A really proud person is seldom grateful. A truly grateful person generally has a humble heart. He, who forms the habit of constantly bearing in mind the manifold blessings and mercies showered upon him, feels more and more his own unworthiness, and comes more and more into the spirit of true humility. But the spirit of gratitude will not only produce in us humility, but will also incite us to industry. As we think of our many reasons for gratitude, and of our unworthiness to receive one-half that we enjoy, we shall find ourselves spurred on to honest toil and earnest endeavor, that we may in some way show our appreciation and become more worthy of our blessings. Thus will the habit of gratitude produce in us the two conditions of true success, humility and industry. I am told that over the gates leading from one quadrangle to another in a great English university is this significant inscription. Over the first gate is written "Per humilitatem;" over the second gate "Per honestatem;" over the third gate "Ad honorem." "Through humility, through industry (or integrity) to honor." These are the two gates to true

honor and success in every walk in life: and if we shall cultivate the spirit of gratitude, we shall not find it hard either to be humble or industrious.

4. The habit of thankfulness will develop and enlarge any one. Ingratitude belittles, warps and dwarfs anybody, while the spirit of gratitude makes for manhood and womanhood. "The real size of a gentleman or lady," some one has said, "can easily be determined by the amount of their appreciation of others, and of favors received." In other words lack of gratitude is lack of manhood and womanhood. No one is smaller than the ingrate and the miser. Gratitude enlarges and develops.

5. The spirit of gratitude makes life easier and more enjoyable. Real gratitude for anything increases the enjoyment of it, and the expression of such gratitude increases both the gratitude and the enjoyment. After my wheel-chair has been used for a few days, it begins to creak and squeak, and I know that it needs oil. And I come into touch with many people who are full of creaks and squeaks, and who need some oil, or other lubricating fluid, to remove the whining of the wheels. I know of no oil like the oil of gladness. "He that hath a merry heart hath a continual feast." And the person who cultivates at all times the thankful spirit has found a lubricating oil, which will remove much of the wear and tear, much of the jar and jostle in the ma-

chinery of life. It will refresh body, mind and spirit.

6. And again, the thankful spirit helps others and wins friendship. "A merry heart doeth good like medicine." And he who cultivates a thankful spirit always has friends. Everybody likes flowers. He who always scatters sunshine is always a favorite. You don't care to see the person who goes about with a doleful face, and a dismal whine, and always talks of his miseries and woes, and sees nothing but dark shadows and cypress trees. Some people seem to enjoy their miseries, and only approach some shadow of a shade of a shining when they have some one's ears into which, with unfeigned contentment, they can pour their oft-repeated tale of woe. But such people generally have few friends, and never are popular with any one. Side by side with these who spend their days in overhauling their personal miseries, are the howling pessimists, who see no cause for gratitude anywhere. Some commiseration is to be felt for those who, overcome by their personal trials and woes, have gotten into the unpleasant and unprofitable business of taking frequent inventories of their miseries. But for those kickers who deliberately put on a pair of the bluest spectacles in order to see everything in the darkest and most discouraging light, nothing but the severest condemnation is fitting. In such black darkness, no good thrives. These, then,

are some of the reasons why we ought to be grateful. It is the proper thing to do; it is most pleasing to God; it tends to produce humility and industry; it develops and enlarges one; it makes life easier and more enjoyable; it makes for friendship and helpfulness.

Praise is one of the greatest acts of which we are capable. Heaven is filled with praise. Thanksgiving constitutes the very atmosphere of the kingdom. Everybody's life ought to be musical. God intended that every life should be so. God's world, as He made it, and wherever sin has not destroyed its melody, is vocal with music. There is the carol of the bird, the ripple of the brook, the soft zephyrs of the evening; even the busy bee hums a merry tune. Man alone withholds his note of praise. Yet everybody has a capacity for praise, for music. Only demons hate harmony. They alone love discord, and make it their business to produce as much of it as possible everywhere. Surely Christians, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and saved from the penalty and dominion of sin, ought to have musical lives. Such surely ought to be "filled with the Spirit, speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with the heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Christianity is particularly a religion

of joy and thankfulness. We must so live it if we are to be Christ's representatives and be true witnesses of His kingdom. He desired that His joy might remain in His disciples, and that their joy might be full. We must realize His spirit of joy and thankfulness in our own lives, if our living is to be of much inspiration to ourselves, or of much helpfulness and attractiveness unto others. Some one has truly written:

> "A religion without thanksgiving, praise and joy
> Is like a flower without perfume, tint or honey;
> There may be such a flower, but surely
> No one would care to pluck it."

If your religion is "a religion without thanksgiving, praise or joy," I don't want it. I wouldn't have it. I should be surprised to find anybody who would want it.

But you say that it is easy to be thankful for some things, but impossible always to be thankful for all things. Any heathen could be thankful for some things. This is not a Christian grace. The Christian grace is to obey Paul's injunction and give "thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ unto God, even the Father." "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "unto God, even the Father," in these two thoughts is the key to "giving thanks always for all things." Christ being my Savior, and God being my Father, make it possible for me to sing:

"Father, for gain or loss I owe
Thee song and prayer. How do I know
With these dim-sighted eyes?
Grief may be good in dark disguise."

For the Christian, gratitude and thankfulness are not and must not be dependent upon outward conditions and circumstances. They must rest upon the settled conviction of the soul that the Father's love and the Savior's grace will, if you are willing and obedient, make "all things to work together for good." God, my Father, is supremely interested in my welfare. Whatever touches my life, therefore, comes by His permitting or providing providence through the circle of his ensphering love. I need not know just what the immediate or the remote outcome is to be. I don't need to know. He knows.

"I do not ask that God should always make my pathway bright.
I only pray that he will hold my hand throughout the night."

At first when the blow falls, manlike I may stagger and cry out with the human Savior, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." Yet He knows how human I am. He knows what is in man. He will be patient and compassionate, and wait till I learn to say: "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." Even in sorrow and for sorrow I may learn to be thankful: as I note the sweetening and strengthening of char

acter and the disciplinary effect of trial upon me; as I note how it drives me closer to Christ, helps me to realize my need, opens up and makes real to me the sympathy and friendship of Jesus, and the sweetness and richness of the manifold promises; as I note how it so humanizes me and teaches me to sympathize with and help others. Yes, even in sorrow and for sorrow I may be grateful. God helping me so to do, I will learn at all times and for all things to give thanks. (1) I will look at the bright side of a dark subject. I will look away to the light, and the shadow will be behind me. I do not destroy the shadow, nor deny its existence. I prefer to look at the light, and the shadow falls into the background. This is both scientific and Christian. "The sweetest songs of the nightingale are only warbled in darkness, and the clearest notes of thankfulness and joy are only heard in the midnight of affliction." (2) I will not only magnify my mercies and take frequent inventory of my blessings; but I will keep down my extravagances, and learn with a few necessary things therewith to be content. Jealousy and covetousness shall not dwell in my heart. (3) I will keep usefully busy and spend my life in helpfulness. And (4) I will learn to live a life of trust, one day at a time; lest I may not be grateful, and may miss present opportunities for service, and present blessings, by worrying over imaginary or

future ills. In these four ways I will learn to be "thankful always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Can you say it? Will you will to do it from now on? Then you may learn to sing "songs in the night," even as Fanny Crosby did, in her more than forty years of blindness. For when she was only eight years old, and had lost her sight for life, she said:

"Oh, what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't!
To weep and sigh, because I'm blind,
I cannot, and I won't."

Or, with another of God's nightingales, an invalid for life and bereft in the very morning of womanhood of her heart's earthly king; with Mrs. Steele, another author of many songs of the night, you too may learn to sing:

"Father, whate'er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at thy throne of grace,
Let this petition rise:
Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free,
The blessings of thy love impart
And help me live to thee."